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No. 36.

Liberty Hall

An Original Drama in Four Acts

BY

R. C. CARTON

AUTHOR OF "LORD AND LADY ALGY," "WHEELS WITHIN
WHEELS," ETC.

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LIBERTY HALL

An Original Drama in Four Acts

BY

R. C. CARTON

AUTHOR OF "LORD AND LADY ALGY," "WHEELS WITHIN
WHEELS," ETC.

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chair L. C. Small table R. with chair R. of it, and an easel above it, arm-chair R. C. with small stool R. of it. Chair up stage L.

HAND PROPERTIES.—Book for Gerald. Salver and card for Luscombe. Umbrella for Todman. Written letter for Owen.

OTHER PROPERTIES REQUIRED.—Box of oil-colors on table R. Unfinished painting on easel. Special portrait over fireplace. Two electric bell pushes.

LIGHTS.—Floats, battens, etc., full up through Act. One lime on each shelf, two limes on window R., one outside transparencies L. All limes to be amber.

MUSIC.—Orchestra to raise curtain.

ACT II.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—Thirty minutes.

FURNITURE USED.—Rocking chair by fireplace, sewing-machine up R., table with flaps R. C., arm-chair L. of it, chair R. of it, chair above it. Old horsehair sofa up C. Table L. C. arm-chair R. of it, chair L. of it. Old cottage piano and stool down L., bookcase up L., easel below it. Counter and stool in shop. Hat rack in passage.

HAND PROPERTIES.—Portfolio for Blanche, book for Robert, newspaper for Amy, pocket-book for Briginshaw, tea-things, kettle with hot water, cooked haddock under dish cover for Crafer.

OTHER PROPERTIES REQUIRED.—Tablecloth in drawer of R. C. table. Knives, forks, spoons, plates, etc., in lower cupboard, also bread, butter, tea, etc., bell on shop-door and bell for side door. Candle on bookcase. Matches in shop, on mantel, on bookcase, and in passage.

LIGHTS.—Full up at rise of curtain. At cues lights to be lowered or raised as required. Four amber limes on street backings to be slowly turned off at cue. Red lime on fireplace.

ACT III.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—Forty-eight minutes.

HAND PROPERTIES.—Flowers and check-book for Owen. Plate of thickly cut sandwiches off L. Novel and key for Robert. Workbox, cards and brooch for Todman. Plate of sandwiches. Umbrella for Briginshaw.

FURNITURE USED.—Same as Act II., except that chair back of R. table is put in shop.

OTHER PROPERTIES REQUIRED.—Tablecloth, plates, knives, forks, glasses, apples, oranges, etc., in upper cupboard. Writing things on machine. Work-basket on piano. Book for Todman on slings. Bottle of sherry (Gilbey's Label) and corkscrew in lower cupboard.

LIGHTS.—Everything full up at rise of curtain except street lengths. At cues lights to be raised or lowered as required. No limes excepting an open one behind street transparencies.

ACT IV.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—Twenty-four minutes.

HAND PROPERTIES.—Brooms and duster for Crafer ; also breakfast things off L. Book and pipe on slings and mantelpiece, respectively, for Owen. Keel of cotton in work-basket. Coins for Owen. Promissory notes for Briginshaw.

FURNITURE USED.—Same as Act II., excepting that chairs are put on tables and stool brought from shop and put R. C.

OTHER PROPERTIES REQUIRED.—Toasting-fork, bread, butter, eggs, etc. Tablecloth in drawer.

LIGHTS.—Half down at rise of curtain, gradually rising when Robert takes down shutters. Four limes in street, two blue, two white, afterwards changing to amber.

LIBERTY HALL.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*The Picture Gallery at Chilworth.*
Time, mid-day.

AMY and GERALD discovered, the former seated R. C., the latter reading poetry seated on stool R. of her.

GER. (*reading*) "And their four lips became one burning mouth!" (*he pauses and looks at her*) "One burning mouth!"

AMY. Is that the end?

GER. Of the first part. Big writer—do you like him?

AMY. Oh, yes.

GER. Ah! give me Swinburne. Of course the purists wouldn't agree with me but I speak as a man of the world.

AMY. (*glancing through the book*) Oh, I think it beautiful! (*reading*)

"Then Tristram spake of many a noble thing."

High feast and storm of tourney round the King."

I think you're so like Tristram.

GER. Do you?

AMY. Oh, yes.

GER. Isolt cared about Tristram, but she married the other beggar; girls always seem to marry the other beggar somehow.

AMY. But she loved Tristram.

GER. Yes, it was an early instance of what Irish politicians call dual ownership. (*rising and crossing to C.*)

AMY. You're to be a politician by and by, are you not?

GER. That's the notion.

AMY. It must be a grand destiny—to make laws to

benefit mankind—to watch over and guide the fortunes of a mighty empire. I can imagine no life so great, I don't wonder you chose it.

GER. It wasn't my doing altogether. You see my Governor wants me to be in the lower house. There's a beastly scheme to run a railway through a corner of our property, and he wants someone he can rely on to perpetually block the bill. As you say—it's a big career.

AMY. Which side are you on?

GER. Don't quite know yet. Nowadays a politician is rather like an Æolian harp, his tone depends on which way the winds blows. The Governor is liberal—politically. I remember he used to have big arguments with your father.

AMY. Ah! poor Papa!

GER. Forgive me. (*goes to her*) It was clumsy of me to speak of him.

AMY. Why? I love to talk of him. It seems impossible to believe he is gone—he who so hated change of any kind. I have been afraid sometimes he never quite got over me.

GER. Eh?

AMY. Papa did so want a son to succeed to the title and estate. When Blanche was born he was rather angry with poor Mamma. I fancy he forgave her the first time, but when I came, my arrival was really—

GER. Tautological?

AMY. I wasn't wanted. It's a dreadful thing to go on not being wanted for seventeen years. Poor Mamma died before I was old enough to ask her forgiveness for not being a boy.

GER. Chilworth is entailed?

AMY. Oh, yes; it dates back to the 15th century.

GER. Then who inherits the title and estates?

AMY. A distant cousin of ours—Hartley Chilworth. (*cleans brushes*) We've never seen him. He's abroad, I fancy.

GER. Young?

AMY. I believe so. Blanche hates him, but I can't quite see that he is to blame. No doubt it's hard to leave the old home—

GER. But you'll be well off, of course?

AMY. Oh, yes.

GER. Well, then, you must take a nutshell in town, near the Park.

AMY. I should like that. We have never seen London. I think it must be wonderful. I long to see all the grand old places, the Abbey, and, above all, the Tower. I suppose you often go to the Tower?

GER. Well, hardly often. (*moves L. C.*)

AMY. Our ancestor Sir Geoffrey went there.

GER. (*pointing to portrait*) That gentleman!

AMY. Yes.

GER. Ah! (*goes up stage R. C.*) But I suppose he was there as a resident not as a visitor. What was he charged with?

AMY. (*proudly*) Oh, high treason. No Chilworth has ever been accused of anything less than high treason.

Enter LUSCOMBE C. from L.

LUS. (*announcing*) Mr. Pedrick!

Enter PEDRICK. AMY moves down and puts book on table L. C. and meets him. LUSCOMBE exits.

MR. P. How are you, Miss Amy? (*they shake hands*)

AMY. This is Mr. Gerald Harringay (*to GERALD*) Mr. Pedrick my poor father's legal adviser and old friend.

MR. P. Harringay—related to Lord Harringay?

GER. Son.

MR. P. Indeed! Then I know your brother—brothers, in fact.

GER. Very likely. There are several of us. I'm number five.

MR. P. I am afraid I disturbed you. (*goes down L. C.*)

GER. Eh? Oh no.

AMY. Mr. Harringay was reading to me. (*goes up L. C.*)

Enter BLANCHE at back L.

BLA. Ah, Mr. Pedrick. (*shakes hands then crosses to GERALD*) Gerald, I didn't know you were here.

GER. I rode over. Amy and I have been improving one another's minds.

MR. P. With the aid of Mr. Swinburne. (*goes up and talks to AMY*)

GER. But I must be getting back now.

BLA. You're not returning to Cambridge, I understand?

GER. No. There has been a little friction with the authorities. They're deaf to all reason up there, so I took my name off. Good-bye. (*goes R.*)

BLA. Good-bye.

AMY. (*crosses to GERALD*) I'll come and give Sir Launcelot his lump of sugar. You're riding him to-day, aren't you?

GER. Yes.

BLA. I suppose we shall see something of you soon?

GER. Oh yes, of course, I'm steeping myself in the blue books just now. Parliament, you know. Good-day, sir.

MR. P. Good-day, Mr. Harringay. (*GERALD goes through window followed by AMY*) Is that promising future statesman a constant visitor?

BLA. He has been. (*crossing and sitting L. C.*) Gerald used to come here sometimes when he was a boy. My poor father liked him and interceded for him when he was obliged to leave Eton.

MR. P. And why did he leave Eton?

BLA. Some trouble with his tutor, I believe.

MR. P. Ah! that young man should have a brilliant parliamentary career before him. There is no surer road to political distinction than insubordination.

BLA. Well, Mr. Pedrick? I have been hoping to see you. Some months have now elapsed since my father's death, and you must see that our position at Chilworth has become hardly dignified. Have you communicated with Mr. Hartley—I beg his pardon—Sir Hartley Chilworth?

MR. P. Yes.

BLA. Has he replied?

MR. P. No, he hasn't. (*sits on settee*)

BLA. Then really you must see that we cannot remain here any longer. Everything that time has made dear to us must pass away into the hands of a stranger.

MR. P. Stranger! Hartley Chilworth is your kinsman.

BLA. That may be ; but we only know the Hartley Chilworth who drives us away from all the associations of our childhood, who breaks every link in our chain of sweet and tender memories. Kinsman—we bear the same name—but kinsmanship ends there.

MR. P. You are young to be so bitter.

BLA. Do you think so ? Tear up the merest sapling from the soil where it was first planted—it may not break under your hand, but it will quiver. Have you ever thought what Chilworth means to a Chilworth ?

MR. P. Home ?

BLA. Ah—and much more. The spirit of old time clings round each stone. The very tapestry on the walls, moth-eaten and dingy, is still a fading record of our stately past. Foolish dreams, perhaps, but the awakening is a sad one. You are smiling ?

MR. P. Yes. I was thinking that dreams are not for the young, who have the busy world before them. Dream-land should form the pleasant resting-place for those who are old, my dear—old and tired.

BLA. Ah, well, all this is folly ! the law is with our kinsman, and we have no alternative but to go.

MR. P. And where do you think of going ?

BLA. I scarcely know yet ; our future will naturally depend on the extent of our income.

MR. P. Hum.

BLA. As to which, of course, there is no doubt ?

MR. P. As to which I fear there is—no doubt.

BLA. Fear.

MR. P. My dear Miss Blanche, according to the provisions of your late father's will, you inherit—conjointly with your sister—all the private property. But recent careful investigation has brought to light the existence of large outstanding liabilities, and when they are discharged the remaining capital will amount, I regret to say, to little or—

BLA. (*in a whisper*) Nothing ?

MR. P. Or nothing. (BLANCHE rises and faces him for a minute, then slowly sits again) My dear, it is a sad task for me to have to tell you this, and one, I think, that your father should have spared his old friend. But let that pass ; your position is now the only matter of im-

portance, and I feel that—are you giving me your attention?

BLA. (*dreamily*) I was thinking of the child, poor little Amy.

MR. P. Has the struggle no terror for yourself?

BLA. None. I am strong, I can face the world. If I seemed inattentive forgive me. I was thinking of the child.

MR. P. My advice to you is to remain at Chilworth until you hear from your cousin. I know something of the new Baronet. I've never seen him, but he has the reputation of being rather eccentric.

BLA. Eccentric!

MR. P. And generous. In these days the possession of the latter quality implies the existence of the former.

BLA. It is one that we shall certainly never put to the test. (*rises*) Surely you must know we have too much pride. (*moves R. C.*)

MR. P. Pride! (*rising*) Oh yes, I am well acquainted with that heirloom of yours. My dear, you say you are prepared to look the world in the face. Ah! you don't know how ugly that face can be when it grows. You fancy you have some idea of what life means, when in reality you and your little sister have been as remote from it as two enchanted princesses in fairy-land.

BLA. Then you advise me to throw myself on the generosity of Sir Hartley Chilworth?

MR. P. I honestly believe that to be the best course. You see you have no other living relative. Stay, I'm wrong; I was forgetting—William Todman.

BLA. William Todman. (*sits on arm of R. C. chair*)

MR. P. You don't even know the name? William Todman married your aunt, your mother's sister.

BLA. Who and what is Mr. Todman?

MR. P. He keeps a shop.

BLA. A shop?

MR. P. A small second-hand book shop and circulating library in Bloomsbury, London.

BLA. (*disgusted*) A shop?

MR. P. Yes, there are such things. Your father married, as people say, beneath him. Your mother was a governess. And about the period she occupied that half-way position between destitution and domestic service,

her sister, your late aunt—for she also is dead—married Mr. Todman.

BLA. Indeed?

MR. P. Fate has never dealt very kindly with him, and during one of his intervals of financial embarrassment, Sir Norman assisted him with a not inconsiderable sum of money. This was gratefully repaid. Mr. Todman called on me a few days ago to express his deep sorrow at your recent loss.

BLA. Did you tell him of—of—our position?

MR. P. Well, yes; he seemed a good deal affected. He's a simple-minded little fellow—rather like a grape in a wine country, existing only to be crushed. (*enter LUSCOMBE C. with card on salver*) But this is by the way, (*moves L. C.*)

BLA. (*reading card*) Mr. Owen—I don't know the name. Did he say why he wished to see me?

LUS. He mentioned the name of Sir Hartley Chilworth, Miss Blanche.

BLA. (*to MR. P.*) His lawyer, no doubt. Perhaps it might be well for you to see him (*to LUSCOMBE*) Show the gentleman in. (*exit LUSCOMBE*) I will leave you. (*crossing L.*)

MR. P. But, Miss Blanche—— (*goes C.*)

BLA. (*at door*) Excuse me, Mr. Pedrick! (*exits L.*)

MR. P. Ah, of course she won't listen to reason. No Chilworth ever would. (*strolls over to fireplace and glances up at picture*) You were an instance of that, weren't you, my friend? One really never knows a Chilworth—or what a Chilworth will do.

OWEN *enters C. from L.*

OWEN. I beg your pardon! (*PEDRICK turns sharply and looks at him*)

MR. P. Eh? Why, bless my heart! surely I am in the presence of Sir Hartley Chilworth?

OWEN. (*after a moment's hesitation*) I don't understand you—my name is Owen.

MR. P. (*still looking at him intently*) Ah, yes, quite so—you—must excuse me. I was looking at this picture, and in the half-light it almost seemed as if—but I must apologize.

OWEN. Not at all. (*puts hat on L. C. table*)

MR. P. I am speaking, then, to Mr. Owen? (OWEN bows) My name is Pedrick. (OWEN bows again) I am Miss Chilworth's legal adviser. (OWEN bows for a third time) Am I addressing a gentleman who stands in a similar relation to Sir Hartley Chilworth?

OWEN. You seem determined to heap unmerited honours upon me. (smiling) You first mistake me for a Chilworth and then for a lawyer. I claim neither distinction.

MR. P. You mentioned Sir Hartley's name on your arrival.

OWEN. Yes; I am the bearer of a communication from him to Miss Chilworth.

MR. P. In writing?

OWEN. In writing. (*produces letter*) This. (PEDRICK holds out his hand for it) Pardon me!

MR. P. If you will give it me, I will place it in Miss Chilworth's hands.

OWEN. I should prefer—with your permission—to do that myself.

MR. P. Very well. (*goes down L.*) You see Sir Hartley has treated us with rather scant courtesy. We don't know where he is—what he's a doing—or why he's doing it. Can you give me his present address, by the way?

OWEN. I'm afraid not. He said something about the Himalayas.

MR. P. The Himalayas!

OWEN. Yes; the address is a little marginal.

MR. P. He's very eccentric, (OWEN smiles) isn't he?

OWEN. I believe he does bear that character.

MR. P. Well, now, about this letter—you won't entrust it to me?

OWEN. I must throw myself on your forbearance. I accepted a certain responsibility and therefore I have a feeling of——

MR. P. Duty?

OWEN. Hardly that.

MR. P. Sentiment? (*goes L. and rings bell*)

OWEN. You've named the exact word. I feel rather sentimental about it.

MR. P. (*retiring L. C.*) You must pardon my scrutiny, but your face is wonderfully familiar to me.

OWEN. What is the nature of your practice, Mr. Pedrick—Chancery or Criminal?

MR. P. Chancery.

OWEN. Ah, well, that is so far reassuring.

Enter LUSCOMBE.

MR. P. Can't account for it. Have the goodness to ask Miss Chilworth if she will return here for a few minutes. (LUSCOMBE bows and exits L.) No (moves C.) my feeling is traceable to that picture, I'm sure of it—very strange resemblance. These are all family portraits. (*pointing up*) This is the celebrated Sir Geoffrey Chilworth, mixed up in the great conspiracy——

OWEN. Mary Queen of Scots? (*standing R. C. above easel*)

MR. P. Yes, like some of the heroes of antiquity, he flung away fame, title, lands—for the sake of a woman.

OWEN. Ah! the sacrifice finds more than one parallel even in these unromantic days.

MR. P. Well, sir, (*takes hat from table*) Miss Chilworth will be here immediately, so I'll leave you. You will perhaps mention that I disobeyed her instructions in view of the courtesy to be shown to a herald who brings, I hope, a flag of truce. (*pointing to letter.* OWEN again bows. *As PEDRICK goes he pauses and looks back, says aside:* Curious—I could have sworn he was a Chilworth. *He then exits L.* OWEN stands thoughtfully for a moment—then looks at picture)

OWEN. They say that dead men tell no tales. Yes, but a falsehood often takes refuge in the disguise of a proverb. I suppose, Sir Geoffrey—I ought to apologize for venturing to resemble you, but if Nature, the universal photographer, decided to preserve the Chilworth negative, the fault was certainly none of mine, and therefore I don't think it was altogether kind on your part to nearly betray an inoffensive descendant—not quite the treatment one expects from so chivalrous an ancestor—and so you flung away—fame—title—lands, did you, for the sake of a woman? Well, why not?

BLANCHE has entered L.; his back is towards her.

BLA. You sent for me, Mr. Pedrick?

OWEN. Mr. Pedrick left me to plead my excuses, Miss Chilworth.

BLA. I am speaking to Mr. ——

OWEN. Owen.

BLA. The solicitor of Sir Hartley Chilworth?

OWEN. No. I must disclaim that title for the second time to-day. I am simply the bearer of a letter to you from your cousin.

BLA. Indeed? (*he bows and hands her the letter, she opens it and is about to read, then glances at him*) Won't you sit down? (*he does so R. C., she sits L. C.*) "My dear cousin. We don't know one another, which is less my fault than my misfortune. I understand my accesssion to the Chilworth Estate will rob you and your sister of everything. This seems such a criminal offence to me, that I feel inclined to give myself up to the British Consul. I don't know when I shall return to England—if ever—so pray stay on at Chilworth till I do. Yours, Hartley Chilworth. P. S. I'm going to the Himalayas." Do you know the contents of this letter, sir?

OWEN. Vaguely.

BLA. We are fortunate in our cousin's choice of a messenger. Do you know his reason for not——

OWEN. For not coming in person?

BLA. Sir Hartley and myself are not known to each other.

OWEN. I recollect he said he had once seen your portrait.

BLA. Very likely. Could you describe him to me?

OWEN. (*with a smile*) I'm afraid you couldn't apply to a worse person. He possesses the usual number of legs and arms and about the usual amount of brains, I should say.

BLA. You don't speak of him with much enthusiasm.

OWEN. Perhaps not.

BLA. And yet you are friends.

OWEN. Scarcely. I can't say that he has ever been a friend to me.

BLA. Fellow-travellers.

OWEN. Yes, we were going the same way; he was travelling for amusement—I was travelling——

BLA. Commercially?

OWEN. (*looking startled and then smiling*) I must really compliment you on your penetration, Miss Chilworth, you are right; I was travelling with—er—soap.

BLA. With soap?

OWEN. After a not entirely satisfactory interview with the Sultan of Turkey, who seemed to think that my opportunities in his country would be somewhat limited, I returned to England. (*rises*) It was then that Sir Hartley entrusted me with that letter to you. He imagined, no doubt, that the social status of a postman was not a matter of any special importance.

BLA. (*rises haughtily*) Well, sir, I suppose I must give this offer some consideration. Meanwhile luncheon is prepared. As the friend of Sir Hartley Chilworth—(*goes L. rings*)

OWEN. Not friend—postman.

BLA. (*returns L. C.*) In either character you have a claim on his hospitality.

OWEN. Thanks ; I have lunched ; but I've heard that Chilworth possesses many points of interest. If I might venture—

Enter LUSCOMBE C. from L.

BLA. Oh, certainly. Show this gentleman the library, the banqueting hall and anything else he may care to inspect. Good day for the present, Mr. — (*looks at card*)

OWEN. Owen. (*taking hat from L. C. table*) O-W-E-N. (*he bows and exits L. C.*)

BLA. Strange for a person in his rank of life ! He seems to speak like a gentleman. I suppose Mr. Pedrick is right, we have lived out of the world, and know nothing of life. Well ! we shall be wiser soon. (*reads letter again*) "I do not know when I shall return to England—if ever—so pray stay on at Chilworth till I do." Stay on at his careless bidding ! Oh, no ! I cannot—I cannot ! (*AMY has entered*) Ah, Amy ! come here, dear—I—I want to talk to you. (*AMY sits at her feet*) Where have you been ?

AMY. Saying good-bye to Gerald—we sha'n't see him again for a week.

BLA. A week ? Amy dear, we shall never see him again.

AMY. Never ?

BLA. Would that matter so much to you ?

AMY. I don't know.

BLA. Oh, Amy, it mustn't matter—it mustn't ; we are going away from Chilworth forever—our past life is dead.

We must bury it silently, and raise no headstone above the grave.

AMY. But we shall begin a new life together (*kneels R. of her*)

BLA. Yes; have you ever thought what it would be like?

AMY. Oh, yes. Gerald says we ought to take a small house—a nutshell he calls it—in London. Near the Park. He says he knows a saddle horse that would just suit me, and that during the opera season we might——

BLA. Hush, dear,—you don't know—how should you? There can be no luxuries in our new world. It goes to my heart to unsaddle your horse and break the nutshell, but it must be so. Amy, would you understand me if I told you we were ruined?

AMY. Ruined!

BLA. It seems papa has left us nothing!

AMY. Nothing! And Cousin Hartley has sent us no word.

BLA. (*hesitatingly*) Well—yes—he has.

AMY. He has? (*rises*)

BLA. He sent me this letter, by a messenger who is mixed up with soap in some way. Read it. (*AMY reads hastily*) Our dear cousin—I know his letter by heart already. (*moves C.*)

AMY. But, Blanche, he writes kindly, I think, and he doesn't seem to wish that we should go.

BLA. Well?

AMY. And so, perhaps—we might——

BLA. We might what? (*rises*)

AMY. We might stay.

BLA. Stay! to eat the bread of charity—his charity. I told you our past is dead; we are dead—to Chilworth and all that Chilworth means. Would you have us linger in the old home—home no longer—the ghosts of what we once were?

AMY. No, dear, but how shall we live?

BLA. (*they cross and stand in front of easel*) I have my art—at least he cannot take that from me. That will support us.

AMY. Oh yes, I had forgotten, you have your art, dear—of course, and such large fortunes are made by painting nowadays. Gerald was telling me that the President

of the Royal Academy is oh, so rich. Why, Blanche, no woman has ever been President as yet.

BLA. No.

AMY. (*putting her arm around BLANCHE and leaning her head on her shoulder*) Ah well! wait a little—wait a little.

Enter LUSCOMBE at back C.

LUS. A Mr. William Todman would like to see you, Miss Blanche.

BLA. (*moves up*) William Todman—I don't know—oh yes! I think I remember. Show him in. (*exit LUSCOMBE, C.*)

AMY. Who is it, Blanche?

BLA. He is our—relation, dear; he married poor Mamma's sister. In fact Mr. Pedrick told me—he—keeps a—shop.

Enter LUSCOMBE, showing in TODMAN at back C.

AMY. A shop!

BLA. Hush! (*TODMAN advances nervously. LUSCOMBE offers to take his hat and umbrella in dumb show*)

TOD. No thank ye, I—I sha'n't be making a long stay. (*exit LUSCOMBE*) Miss Chilworth?

BLA. I am Miss Chilworth.

TOD. Miss—Miss Blanche perhaps?

BLA. Yes, I am Blanche. This is Amy. (*TODMAN bows very low, in doing so he drops his hat, and in picking it up he lets his umbrella fall This profoundly disconcerts him*) Won't you sit down?

TOD. Thankye, my dear—(*does so in chair up L.*) er Miss—I should say Chilworth—Miss Chilworth. (*sits timidly, still terribly bothered with his hat and umbrella. He finally puts the latter on the former.*) I shan't be making a long stay. (*rises*)

BLA. Won't you let me order you some luncheon?

TOD. (*coming down and sitting L. C.*) Not a morsel, thankye, I 'ad a snack at the Chilworth Arms. The 'ot weather turns one against food. (*wipes his face with colored handkerchief, then takes hat off umbrella and puts it in it*) It's a pleasant journey 'ere. I 'ad a bit of luck

to start with. All the second-class carriages were full so I 'ad the chance to travel first, and I met a kind gentleman who was very affable, liked the window down and was quite free-'anded with 'is Bradshaw, but all this time perhaps my name ain't known to you.

BLA. (*who is seated* R. C. AMY *standing above*) Oh, yes, Mr. Todman. We know you married our mother's sister.

TOD. I did 'ave that presumption ; but I—I was only a young man at the time.

BLA. (*smiling*) Presumption !

TOD. Oh, it was ! I've often felt it to be so. My poor 'Arriet often felt it to be so, in fact she said as much—more than once. However, my dears, as you know *who* I am you most likely know *what* I am.

BLA. Mr. Pedrick said you kept a—a——

TOD. A shop. That's so, but the business is literary. I am a second-hand bookseller, and circulating librarian in Bloomsbury, London.

BLA. Bloomsbury ! What a pretty name. We've never been in London. Bloomsbury sounds so fresh and sweet.

TOD. Ah ! it ain't. It may 'ave been fresh and sweet once, but not in my time. There's a deal more of burial than bloom about it now.

BLA. Your wife, our—our aunt is—is——

TOD. Dead, poor dear, yes. 'Er circulation was never what you would call brisk, and although I tried 'ard with sea air and what not to force 'er through another edition it was no use, she went out of print at last ! (*he wipes his eyes with handkerchief, is again worried with hat and umbrella.* AMY, *seeing this, goes to him*)

AMY. Won't you let me take these ? We are sorry for you. We know what it is to lose one who is very dear to us. (*moves back of table*)

TOD. I know you do, my dear, I know you do. I'm a selfish beast and (*giving the things reluctantly*) I oughtn't to make a long stay.

BLA. We are very pleased to see you, and you must tell us if we can serve you in any way.

TOD. (*rising hastily*) Lor' bless you, my dear—you don't think I came down for—anything of that sort ? Oh, I 'ope you don't think that !

AMY. We think nothing of you that is not kind and considerate.

TOD. Thankye, my dear, thankye (*shakes hands with AMY L. C.*) I get a bit flurried. (*sits*) Thankye again, my dear, it's just this way. I've always been a struggling man. You see my business ain't the business I could wish it to be. It don't come on, and the books—don't go off; and the circulating library don't circulate, at least not much. I've often felt I was a bit too near to Mudie's. I wouldn't say a word against Mudie's—live and let live—but it is so. Not that I complain altogether. The late Mr. Charles Dickens 'as been a wonderful friend to me in every edition; in fact I made so bold as to buy a bust of 'im—it seemed almost a duty. Well, once, when my outlook was a bit more dark than ordinary your esteemed father 'ad the generosity to assist me with a large sum of money.

AMY. Blanche! (*moves over to her*)

BLA. Yes, we know,—but Mr. Pedrick told me that your debt was long since paid.

TOD. Ah, but it ain't, it can't be, not in full. A man who receives such a favor as that 'as more to do than pay back the mere money. My dear—Mr. Pedrick tells me that, thanks to similar noble, generous acts, your father died without being able to make proper provision for—you—I'm!—I'm right in thinking so?

BLA. You are right, we are penniless and homeless.

TOD. (*rising and standing respectfully*) No, my dear, that ain't quite true. You can't be 'omeless while I have a 'ome. It's a poor place, so poor that I scarcely like to offer you the half of it, but such as it is will you come with your dear sister and brighten it for an old fellow who 'asn't known much sunshine these many years? You'd be able to do just whatever you liked—it's Liberty 'All you know, quite Liberty 'All, and so will you honor me by—by thinking it over?

BLA. (R. C.) But—we—we should inconvenience you. Your house may be small. (*rises and moves C.*)

TOD. (L. C.) No, my dear, it ain't, it's large and what's called rambling—though I never could see what the word meant—because if rambling, it's strange it hasn't rambled into a nicer district; it's been my 'abit to take a gentle-

man-lodger up to now, but that could be dropped if you wished it.

BLA. No, we wouldn't for the world make any change in your usual life. Amy, you will let me decide?

AMY. Yes, dear, of course. (*seated R. C. BLANCHE goes up R. and rings bell*)

BLA. (*coming down again*) I—cannot tell you what I—what we feel.

TOD. Don't try, my dear, please don't. Your good father cast 'is bread upon the waters, and a bit of crust—it don't amount to more—as floated back again—that's all, my dear.

Enter LUSCOMBE L.

BLA. Ask Mr. Pedrick to be so good as to come to me here. Oh! and that other gentleman, Mr—er—Owen, I should be glad to see him also. (*exit LUSCOMBE*)

TOD. Owen! That was the name of my fellow-traveller. I saw it on 'is 'and-bag. 'E was very affable; 'e was reading "David Copperfield"; that's 'ow I first came to take to 'im. I lent 'im my paper-knife—I couldn't bear to see the late Mr. Dickens mutilated with a railway ticket.

Enter PEDRICK L.

PED. (*shakes hands standing back of settee*) Ah, Mr. Todman! Dear me!

TOD. I 'ope I see you well, Mr. Pedrick. I came—er—not with any idea of making a long stay, but—

PED. What brings you here?

BLA. His gentle sympathy for those who need it sadly. (*Music: orchestra*)

Enter OWEN C.

OWEN. You wish to see me, Miss Chilworth? (*goes R. C. OWEN nods good-humouredly to TODMAN who bows to him respectfully*)

BLA. (*bows to him*) Mr. Pedrick, we learn through that gentleman that Sir Hartley is willing we should remain for a short time longer in the home where we were born. Will you kindly take steps to inform him that we have given his proposal consideration, and that we decline it. (*OWEN is startled*)

MR. P. Decline it!

BLA. Mr. Todman has offered to share his home with us. This offer it is our intention to gratefully accept.

TOD. It's a poor place, Mr. Pedrick, but they'll be as welcome as spring time, and as free—as free—as the British Museum—Liberty 'All, you know. (*moves L.*)

OWEN. I speak with all possible humility, Miss Chilworth, but have you quite decided on this step? (*Music: forte*)

BLA. Entirely; when you next visit the Himalayas, perhaps you will inform Sir Hartley that the old home is vacant, and that he must find some other caretaker than Blanche Chilworth. (*to TODMAN who returns L. C.*) Uncle—you will let us call you so, will you not—As you say—your home if humble is at least free. Well, if you will give us shelter we will go with you to Liberty Hall.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The back parlour of WILLIAM TODMAN'S shop. Glass doors at back leading into shop, which in turn leads to street. A door L. faces the stage and opens on passage and side door, which also opens on street. The room is furnished in very old-fashioned style. Fireplace R. with two low fixture sideboards, recesses each side of it; over sofa there is a small hanging bookcase. On mantelpiece a bust of the late Charles Dickens is prominently placed. There is also a large oil painting of the late MRS. TODMAN over sofa at back. The time is afternoon.*

When curtain rises AMY is discovered lying on sofa, TODMAN is seated at table R. with some tradesman's books in front of him. ROBERT and Customer in shop. CRAFER enters and comes L. C.

TOD. What is it, Crafer?

CRA. They 'aven't sent the dried 'addock for tea.

TOD. Oh, very well—I'll call round about it. (*CRAFER bangs door to*)

TOD. I wish she wouldn't slam that door. (*AMY yawns*) I beg your pardon, my dear.

AMY. I didn't speak, uncle.

TOD. No? I fancied you did.

AMY. I only yawned.

TOD. Ah! you want your tea.

AMY. Oh no, I don't—I haven't forgotten dinner yet, I'm sorry to say.

TOD. It—wasn't—quite the meat-pie I could 'ave wished. When Crafer is more put out than ordinary, she comes down 'eavy with the crust.

AMY. And if you speak to her she always gives warning.

TOD. That's so, and if it don't frighten me, she wants more coals in, and something generally goes wrong with the boiler. Of course it's a pity 'er brother-in-law should 'appen to be a plumber (AMY *puts her hand to her head*) Is your 'ead aching, my dear?

AMY. A little, uncle.

TOD. I'm afraid the sofa is a bit 'ard. (*rises and goes to her*)

AMY. Not harder than other things.

TOD. (*sighing*) No, that's true; but you oughtn't to 'ave found it out yet awhile; life oughtn't to be stuffed with 'orse'air at your age. You're 'ipped, that's what it is. Shall I fetch you a nice rousing book—one of Rider 'Aggard's? (AMY *shakes her head*)

Enter ROBERT from shop.

ROB. Please, sir, will you take fourpence for the last of the Mohicans?

TOD. Fourpence—why, it isn't a farthing a Mohican. Oh yes, I'll take it. (ROBERT *lingers looking at AMY*) D'you 'ear me? Go along—you know if you don't keep your eye on the book stall the outside customers get absent-minded. (ROBERT *goes slowly*) Ah! dear me! (*moves to top of L. C. table and sits*)

AMY. What's the matter, uncle?

TOD. I'm looking through the tradesman's books, my dear. Every week things seem to be more a pound. Owen generally adds 'em up for me—'e's a affable gentleman, isn't 'e?

AMY. Oh yes. (*exit customer*)

TOD. And 'e often lends a 'and in the shop, too—seems to know all the books by 'eart. Of course I wouldn't

'ave let the second floor back if your sister 'ad made the least objection, but she didn't, bless her, and so when Owen called and named the thing, I met his view to the extent of a new second-'and washstand and occasional use of parlour.

AMY. I've always liked Mr. Owen, but there seems something a little strange about him. I wonder if he's had a past.

TOD. Yes. In the soap line I've heard 'im say. Where's your sister, my dear?

AMY. She has gone out as usual with her portfolio of sketches. A dealer told her yesterday there was no demand for them in London.

TOD. Ah!

AMY. I suppose the London people can't bear to be reminded that there are meadows and trees—and flowers somewhere. They try to forget them, no doubt, and so they won't buy pictures.

TOD. Oh, I don't know. There's Bedford Square—and the Parks—I spent a very pleasant afternoon in 'Yde Park last Sunday. There was a gentleman on two tres-sles under a tree who explained to us that it was a great shame we should be kept out of other people's property any longer. Then I went as far as—— (*ROBERT'S head has appeared over curtain in glass door*)

AMY. (*looking up and seeing ROBERT*) Oh, dear!

TOD. What is it? (*sees ROBERT*) Go away, sir, 'ow dare you? (*ROBERT disappears—there is a ring at side door*)

TOD. I shall 'ave to speak to 'im. (*crossing to front of R. C. table*) 'E left a book collector among the old quartos the other day while 'e went for change—it's tempting Providence. 'ark!

CRA. (*outside*) I wish you'd wipe your shoes. What do you think the shop is there for?

GER. (*outside*) It didn't occur to me to go through the shop.

TOD. I think there's some one come to call.

CRA. (*throwing door open to AMY*) Party to see you. Can he come in?

AMY. (*who has risen*) Certainly.

CRA. (*calling down passage*) You can come in.

GERALD enters and shakes hands with AMY.

AMY. So you've found your way. Uncle, this is Mr. Gerald Harringay. (*moves R. C.*)

TOD. (*going C. and looking anxiously towards CRAFER, who remains defiantly L. C.*) I'm 'appy to (*GERALD holds out hand. TODMAN is about to take it, but suddenly waves CRAFER away—this she ignores*) I'm very 'appy indeed to—to—(*again evades GERALD unconsciously in the same way*) What is it, Crafer? What do you want?

CRA. I want the side door to be put on a proper footing. There's the shop, and why not come through it? I say, it ain't to be supposed that—(*ROBERT'S head has appeared again*)

GER. I'm awfully sorry.

TOD. (*seeing ROBERT and waving him away*) Go away, sir—'ow dare you? I've told you before. (*ROBERT disappears*)

GER. Eh?

TOD. Not you, Mr. Harringay—not you, sir. Sit down. (*GERALD moves to AMY*)

CRA. It were understood, I 'ope, that you suit yourself, Mr. Todman.

TOD. Yes, it were.

CRA. Likewise that I shall require the whole of Wednesday to bury my mother.

TOD. You 'ad the 'ole of Friday to christen your nephew—but I've no objection—you can bury your mother all day Wednesday as far as I'm concerned.

CRA. Then I have no more to say, as long as parties understand as I can't be expected to answer side doors, when there's the shop for parties to come through and I that busy in the kitchen. (*she says this as she goes out*)

TOD. Don't slam the— (*she bangs door to*) I wish she wouldn't slam that door.

CRA. (*putting her head in*) We want more coals in.

TOD. Very well, don't sla—a— (*she again bangs door*) Ah! she's done it again. Let me take your 'at, sir?

GER. Oh, don't trouble, Mr. Todman.

TOD. I'll 'ang it up in the 'all. (*takes it into passage*)

GER. Can't you come out for a bit?

AMY. I don't know—I'm afraid not.

TOD. (*returning*) Can I offer you a little refreshment, sir? (*AMY shakes her head at GERALD*)

TOD. A—a—glass of wine?

GER. No, thanks.

TOD. Not a—a—nip of anything?

GER. No, thanks.

TOD. Well, the doctors say drinking between meals is bad—bad for the 'ealth. There was an uncle of mine—a licensed victualler (*AMY puts her hand to her head*) who got into the 'abit of it, and it was nip—nip—nip—morning and night till it left 'im at last without a rag to 'is back, or a coat to 'is stomach. Is your 'ead bad again, my dear?

AMY. Yes, uncle. (*above L. table*)

TOD. Ah! you want your tea. We 'ave a little relish with it as a rule. Which reminds me I must go round to the fish-mongers. I sha'n't be long. (*exit TODMAN*)

GER. I was afraid I shouldn't get a word with you.

TOD. (*enters room*) My dear, if Briginshaw should look in will you tell 'im I sha'n't be long?

AMY. Certainly, uncle! (*TODMAN again exits*)

GER. I've been hoping to get a few minutes alone with you because— (*TODMAN again puts his head in*)

TOD. (*comes c.*) I don't know 'ow to apologize for forgetting. You'll stay to 'ave tea with us, Mr. 'Arrin-gay? (*AMY shakes her head*)

GER. Eh—er—no. I'm afraid not to-day, thanks.

TOD. You'll excuse me asking, because, if we'd been so fortunate as to find you disengaged, I'd 'ave brought in something extra—Good-day for the present, sir.

GER. Good-day. (*going to door, then returning. exit TODMAN*)

AMY. It was clever of you to understand when I shook my head.

GER. (*with a slight laugh*) Your signals were not hospitable. Though, as a matter of fact, I didn't want a nip of anything.

AMY. I was so glad you didn't promise to stay to tea—I didn't wish it. (*moves R. C. and sits on arm of chair*)

GER. No, I saw that—that was why I was proof against the attractions of the little relish. (*going to her*) Tell me, what is the little relish?

AMY. It's a dried haddock to-day.

GER. Oh!

AMY. Thick tea, you know—we call it thick tea—it seemed strange at first, but, as Mr. Owen says, it kills two meals with one tablecloth.

GER. Who is Mr. Owen?

AMY. Our lodger.

GER. Ah!

AMY. He has the second floor back (*smiling*) with occasional use of parlour—this is the parlour.

GER. Oh!

AMY. This is what uncle calls Liberty Hall. (*goes up to rocking-chair*)

GER. (*glancing round*) Liberty. Not, I suppose, with reference to the style of the furniture? (*joins AMY*)

AMY. I like Mr. Owen, but he and Blanche never seem to quite get on together. (ROBERT'S *head appears again*) He had some acquaintance with our cousin, Hartley Chilworth, and that in itself— (*seeing ROBERT*) Oh, dear! (*goes down R.*)

GER. Eh? (*turning round*) Hulloo, who's that? ROBERT *disappears*)

AMY. That's Robert, our shop boy. I think he—he—rather admires me. (*crossing to L.*) He glares in at me a good deal during the day—I fancy it eases his mind.

GER. (*following slowly*) So I have a rival, have I? (*pause*) Well, have you thought over what I said to you? Think what a wretched state of things this life is for you—a Chilworth.

AMY. But if I were to listen to—to listen to you—what of your future—what would your father—?

GER. (*slight pause*) Oh, there'd be a row of course—there always is with the governor—but why shouldn't we get away together quietly? I've accepted that appointment I told you of. Your sister doesn't know we have been meeting each other?

OWEN *enters shop and sees ROBERT again looking over curtain. OWEN, having pulled ROBERT down, enters through glass door.*

AMY. (*confused*) Oh—er—Mr. Owen. This is Gerald Harringay. Gerald, this is our—our—

OWEN. Lodger. (*they bow*) I knew you had a male

visitor, Miss Amy, by the deplorable mental condition in which I found my distinguished colleague. (*goes R. of table*)

GER. Colleague?

OWEN. Robert, the shop boy. Is Mr. Todman out? (*sits*)

AMY. Yes; he won't be long, because he expects Mr. Briginshaw.

OWEN. Does he? Dear—dear!

GER. Who's Briginshaw?

AMY. An old friend of uncle's—he also is in—

OWEN. Trade. We're all of us a little commercial, Mr. Harringay. Everything at his emporium—is in the gross—the description even extends to the proprietor. (*to*

AMY) Miss Chilworth is also out? Of course, though, I see she is.

AMY. How?

OWEN. I miss the portfolio.

AMY. I think I hear her key in the door. (*noise of turning key up L. C. door*)

BLANCHE *enters wearily* L. C.

BLA. Gerald! (*she puts portfolio by chair L. of R. C. table*) Where did you spring from?

GER. Well, I er—

AMY. (*hastily*) He was passing through London and—so— (*she afterwards sits L. C.*)

BLA. You come from Harringay Castle? (GERALD *nods*) Then you have seen Chilworth?

GER. Yes.

BLA. Oh, tell me! How was the old place looking?

GER. Much the same.

BLA. Then the new owner—

GER. I don't fancy your cousin has returned to England.

BLA. Not returned! Then where is he?

OWEN. (*who has been looking through the tradesman's books*) Himalayas.

BLA. Oh! I was forgetting, we have an infallible guide to our cousin's movements.

OWEN. Have you any recollection of a savoy cabbage on Friday? I can't quite localize it.

BLA. (*ignoring the question*) The old flower garden.

(*sits R. C.*) Ah, I sometimes wonder what a flower is like,

GER. I suppose you don't see many nowadays.

BLA. Oh, no—nothing in this neighbourhood is very flowery.

OWEN. Not even the potatoes.

BLA. (*still ignoring OWEN*) And your career, Gerald?

GER. I've got an appointment as an attaché.

BLA. How about Parliament?

GER. That stands over. I daresay I shall have a finger in the legislative pie later on. (*AMY puts her hand to her head*)

AMY. Oh!

BLA. What's the matter? (*crossing to her*)

AMY. His expression recalled the early dinner.

BLA. Have you been out to-day?

AMY. No.

GER. I wanted her to come for a stroll, but she wouldn't.

BLA. Oh, why not? Go, and put on your hat, dear—it will do you good. (*moves L.*)

AMY. Shall I? Will you wait? (*rises in front of R. table*) I won't be a minute. (*exit L. C.*)

BLA. How did you find us out? (*takes off hat and puts it on piano*)

GER. (*moves over R., confused*) Oh—er—I—I—saw Mr. Pedrick the other day and he gave me your address. (*OWEN looks up and listens*)

OWEN. (*aside*) Pedrick is out of England—the future Prime Minister is lying—I wonder why.

GER. (*turning to him*) Eh?

OWEN. I didn't speak, Mr. Harringay. Miss Chilworth, our butlerman has a curiously imaginative temperament—eleven pounds of Brittany in one week. I shall have to nerve myself for an interview with Crafer.

GER. (*to OWEN*) The servant?

OWEN. Yes—have you met?

GER. I had the indiscretion to come in by the side door. (*standing C.*)

OWEN. Then I condole with you. Crafer came to us—in parenthesis—between the departure of one servant, and the advent of another, and somehow she has remained on—a kind of permanent temporary.

AMY enters L. C.

BLA. Go along, dear—don't be out too late.

GER. (*to* BLANCHE) Good-bye—I shall call in again before I leave. Is it safe to go out by the side door?

OWEN. Oh, yes. There is no law against that. (*they exit. BLANCHE after slight pause goes over to portfolio. She is about to lift it when OWEN rises hastily*)

OWEN. Allow me! (*he takes it*)

BLA. (*carelessly*) Pray don't trouble.

OWEN. No trouble—I'm sorry to notice it's still rather heavy.

BLA. It is no lighter since this morning, though I don't know why *you* should be sorry, Mr. Owen. (*crossing and sitting L. C.*)

OWEN. Don't you? Then among my numerous faults you include want of sympathy.

BLA. (*haughtily*) Sympathy between us! There can be no sympathy between two people who possess entirely different feelings—who belong to worlds that are as far apart as England from Australia.

OWEN. Then you deny the possibility of Imperial Federation? You've been unlucky again.

BLA. Yes.

OWEN. Ah! (*crosses to easel L. C., on which he puts portfolio*)

BLA. I have been trying to sell my paintings. I thought they might be worth something, but it appears I was wrong.

OWEN. This is the age of disillusion,

BLA. The idea of taking money for the work of one's hands and brain is humiliating enough.

OWEN. (*L. of L. table*) Ah! There you rouse all the commercial traveller within me. Every one has something to sell. The principle is universal.

BLA. Not every one surely.

OWEN. Every one. The saleable object varies of course. It may be a landed estate—or a book—or a vote—or a pound of butter—the principle remains the same—something to sell—sometimes it's a heart—even marriages are occasionally commercial; in these days shop-keepers become Lords—Lords develop into shop-keepers—what is true of the merchant is equally true of the statesman and the artist.

BLA. The artist?

OWEN. Certainly. You'll find the words commercial value on the back of every masterpiece.

BLA. I don't believe it. The true artist obeys the instinct that urges him to portray all that is most beautiful in nature—all that is noblest in humanity.

OWEN. Is it in that spirit that a Royal Academician paints the portrait of a member of the County Council?

BLA. (*rising*) Discussion is impossible between us. I might have known. (*moves R. to fireplace*)

OWEN. Yes, I own to being a groveller. (*moves R. C.*) Free education may humanize my species later on—meanwhile, would you listen to me for a few minutes? Miss Chilworth, I know, of course, your determination to reject every form of help in a certain quarter, but in doing so you fall back on your own resources—a somewhat frail refuge.

BLA. What makes you think so?

OWEN. Your face, the index of a heavy heart—and (*pointing to it*) portfolio. I have seen that you were unhappy.

BLA. Unhappy! (*sits R. of table*)

OWEN. Unhappy—and I fancy I could—if you would let me—be of some slight assistance to you. Of course, in a very humble way—(*smiling*) I'm not on any hanging committee, but my commercial associations enable me to offer you a small but less uncertain source of income, and one in which your artistic talent would be to some extent utilized.

BLA. Well?

OWEN. As you are probably aware, there has been of late years a considerable demand for Christmas cards.

BLA. Christmas cards!

OWEN. Many of which are hand-painted. (*she looks at him*) Why not? Why should not the greetings of friendship and affection be rendered beautiful by art? Dear old Santa Claus is no longer quite the same friend from the moment we cease to be children, but surely it's pleasant to remember that he still leaves his card on us at Christmas time.

BLA. And you actually suggest that I should colour Christmas cards?

OWEN. I had that temerity.

BLA. Mr. Owen, I should have thought that your knowledge of our history might have taught you a little consideration. Why are you here, a daily—hourly reminder of the man who has blighted our lives? What is your reason?—for I suppose you have a reason.

OWEN. Yes, I have a reason, but I understood you raised no objection at the time to my becoming your uncle's lodger.

BLA. I naturally wished that our presence here should interfere as little as possible with my uncle's life. I relied on your recognition of what was due to one in my position——

OWEN. From one in mine—quite so! Miss Chilworth (*rises*) if it is your object to inflict pain on me, it may gratify you to know that you have amply succeeded. In introducing my friend Santa Claus I was not entirely considering you. A glance round this room must surely prove to you that your uncle is terribly poor, and in making my presumptuous offer, do you know I was inspired by the idea that to help him to support his burden would not be a very degrading labour, even for one who happened to be nobly born. However, one thing is obvious! My companionship is distasteful to you. Very well, I assure you solemnly I will not enter this room again until you ask me to do so. (*moves up to shop door taking tradesmen's books with him*)

BLA. Mr. Owen. (*rises*)

OWEN. (*with hand on glass door*) After all the shop is the spot towards which a person in my sphere would naturally gravitate, and you may rely, Miss Chilworth, on my not again crossing the boundaries of Liberty Hall. (*he exits into shop*)

BLA. I wonder if he is speaking the truth! If so, this offer may have been meant kindly. He said he would not enter this room again until I ask him. Ask him!—It seems as if the room would be more gloomy and squalid without him; but ask him to come back—— Oh, no, I can't do that! I can never do that. (*moves to rocking-chair R. in which she sits*)

Enter TODMAN.

TOD. They apologized 'an'somely and will send it round!

BLA. Send what round, uncle ?

TOD. The 'addock for tea, my dear. 'As Owen come back ?

BLA. He's in the shop.

TOD. (*going towards shop door and opening it*) I want 'alf a word with him. Owen !

OWEN. Yes.

TOD. Come in a minute.

OWEN. No—I—won't come in.

TOD. Why won't 'e come in ? 'As 'e been put out ? (*goes down C.*) 'As Briginshaw been, do you happen to know ? (*sits R. C.*)

BLA. I think not. (*rises and goes to him*) That reminds me whenever Mr. Briginshaw comes here you always seem rather sad afterwards. There isn't any—any monetary reason for his tone towards you ?

TOD. Bless you, no, my dear. Oh, no—oh, dear me no !

BLA. (*turning away*) I am glad to know that. (*crosses to piano*)

TOD. (*aside*) 'Eaven forgive me—I wouldn't 'ave 'er know the truth for all the world.

BRIG. (*voice heard in shop*) Governor in ? All right, I'll find him. (*TODMAN rises and moves to front of R. C. table, then up to machine on which he puts ink-pot*)

BRIGINSHAW *enters through glass door.*

BRIG. Oh, there you are ! Well, Toddy ?

TOD. Well, Briginshaw ?

BRIG. How's yourself ? (*seeing BLANCHE and removing his hat*) Good-afternoon, Miss. (*BLANCHE bows haughtily and takes her hat and cloak from piano*)

BRIG. You never come round to the Emporium.

BLA. No.

BRIG. Ah, but you should. The winter fashions are just in and if there's anything you fancy——

BLA. I have no intention of purchasing anything at present, thank you.

BRIG. Purchasing ! Oh, I didn't mean that. Toddy was telling me it's your birthday next month—he and I are old friends, you know—so if there was any little thing you fancied——

BLA. Mr. Briginshaw, (*moves up to L. C. door*) I hope

you are not speaking seriously. (*she exits, BRIGINSHAW whistles*)

BRIG. Toplofty, ain't she? What's the matter with her? (*crossing to fireplace*)

TOD. (*nervously arranging cushions on sofa*) I don't think she likes you calling me Toddy—after all it is a bit vulgar. You never 'ear me call you Briggy (*gets candle from side-board L. and puts it with a box of matches on L. C. table*)

BRIG. Fine girl though.

TOD. You 'avent come to talk about 'er, I suppose?

BRIG. (*with back to fireplace*) What if I did want to talk about her, eh? You know me. When I make up my mind to bring a certain thing about, I generally pull it off, eh? I haven't changed much since the days—twenty years and more—when we were fellow-shopmen at old Bullgate's. Rum times, weren't they, Toddy? Our lives weren't all sack and sugar.

TOD. I don't know. I remember you got whatever sugar there was. I only got the sack. (*customer enters shop*)

BRIG. That's neither here nor there. I felt my way and pushed on, and now I'll back my Emporium against any establishment in the 'Ampstead Road.

TOD. I know—you needn't tell me what you've been and who you've done.

BRIG. Eh?

TOD. Who you've been and what you've done, I mean.

BRIG. What's that fellow doing in the shop?

TOD. Mr. Owen. (*sits L. C.*)

BRIG. Ah, you've got too many shopmen; you don't want two people to pull a book off a shelf. Do you know what you owe me?

TOD. (*faintly*) No!

BRIG. I was toting it up yesterday and it figures out (*sits R. of R. C. table*) where's my book? (*takes out pocketbook, OWEN opens glass door and stands unnoticed*)

BRIG. You owe me first and last eight hundred and fifty pound—and that means—

TOD. Ruin. (*sits L. C.*)

OWEN. Mr. Todman.

BOTH. Eh?

OWEN. Pardon my interrupting you. Adam Bede is out, I think.

TOD. Yes, Owen.

OWEN. Thanks. *(returns into shop. Customer exits, OWEN lights gas—upon which shop lights go up)*

BRIG. Adam Bede out, too! Who's Adam Bede? More shopmen? *(rises and crosses to him)* Well, now then—you owe me eight fifty—and you can't pay me? You know I could sell you up!

TOD. *(rising and crossing L. C.)* Yes, I know that. I'm a bit tired of it all. I was never what you might call a perfect copy—a lot of my leaves seem to 'ave been missing from the first—I suppose the thread at the back of me wasn't put in firm enough. I don't know that it would matter much if I came away from the binding altogether.

BRIG. It hasn't come to that yet.

TOD. I should like to keep the portrait of my poor 'Arriet, and the bust of the late Mr. Charles Dickens—if quite agreeable to you.

BRIG. I don't want a bust or a bust up. I may be willing to cancel the debt altogether. It ain't everything to be a successful man—as I am—mind you. *(sits L. C.)* There isn't a 'bus between Nag's 'Ead, 'Olloway and Tottenham Court Road that hasn't got my advertisement on the knifeboard. But I'm sick of a lonely life, Toddy, I want a wife.

TOD. Well, there's a good many young women about, one way and another.

BRIG. Ah, I don't want a cheap article. *(rising)* I'm not waiting for the sales to be on—your niece Blanche is a fine girl.

TOD. Blanche!

BRIG. *(going to him)* I know what you told me about her coming of an extra superfine stock—but the fabric is a bit damaged now, eh? There's a three farthings in the corner of the ticket. *(taking him R. C.)*

TOD. I believe she'd die first.

BRIG. Would she, then she can say so. The first time I saw her I remember thinking how wonderful well she'd look in the mantle department—anyway, you can name it to her.

TOD. Oh, I can't, I can't.

BRIG. There are exactly eight hundred and fifty reasons why you should. Come, will you do it?

CRAFER *enters with tea tray which she puts on sofa, afterwards crossing to R. C. table and getting cloth from drawer.*

TOD. I don't know, you make my head swim.

BRIG. Because I want to keep it above water. Evening meal, eh? Then I'll get along. *(takes up hat)* What was that you said to me the other day about giving a party on the nineteenth of next month?

CRA. *(who is laying table)* We shall want some more butter. *(she finishes laying table and exits)*

TOD. It's Blanche's birthday. *(crossing L. C. and sits)* I thought it might be a little break—

BRIG. *(standing C.)* I suppose I'll have an invite? *(TODMAN nods)*

BRIG. Well, you can put the matter to her, and let me know then. *(leans over TODMAN)* And see here, if things don't go right, it will be a break! and not a little one—good evening.

TOD. *(faintly)* Good evening! *(BRIGINSHAW exits through shop)* Oh, my goodness what will become of me! What shall I do?

Enter CRAFER L. C. with large black kettle which she takes to fire R.

CRA. Something's wrong with the boiler?

TOD. Ah, something would be. *(CRAFER arranges table. BLANCHE enters L. C.)*

BLA. Hasn't Amy come back? *(TODMAN is sitting with his head on his hand)*

BLA. Uncle, you are ill? *(bell rings, side bell rings, CRAFER goes to answer it and leaves the parlor door open.)*

TOD. No, my dear; I'm all right! I feel a sinking. I want my tea. *(afterwards sits in rocking-chair)*

BLA. How tired and sad he seems; I believe Mr. Owen was right after all. *(CRAFER has let in AMY, who now enters. CRAFER remains to light gas jet in passage and then goes to kitchen)* You're late, dear. *(lights candle on L. C. table)*

AMY. *(confused)* Am I—yes—I fancy—I am a little—we—I didn't notice the time.

BLA. (*smiling*) I began to think you had run away together.

AMY. (*eagerly*) Oh, Blanche ! I couldn't—I—I—what do you mean ?

BLA. Silly child ! Of course I was only joking. Why, how pale you look suddenly !

AMY. Do I ?

TOD. (*is sitting wearily in rocking-chair R.*) She wants 'er tea. I can tell the 'addock is nearly done by the aroma. (BLANCHE crosses to R. C. table, which she finishes setting)

AMY. Where is Mr. Owen ?

BLA. He's in the shop, I think.

AMY. He promised to look me out Tennyson's "Idylls of the King." I'll ask him. (*goes to shop door*) Mr. Owen !

OWEN. Yes, Miss Amy.

AMY. What about my book ?

OWEN. Oh, yes, forgive me. I'll send Robert in with it. (BLANCHE looks round and then looks away hastily)

AMY. Aren't you coming yourself ?

OWEN. No, I'm rather busy. (AMY moves away to piano)

CRAFER enters with covered dish which she puts on table.

TOD. Ah, 'ere it is. (*lifts cover for a moment*) It seems a little burnt.

CRA. It's just caught fire. You can't expect me to be everywhere.

TOD. We don't expect you to be everywhere—we shouldn't like it. (CRAFER goes out) Don't slam the—(*she bangs door*) Ah, dear me ! Where's Owen ? (*calls*) Owen ! (OWEN is seated back of counter)

OWEN. Yes.

TOD. Tea.

OWEN. Not for me, thanks.

TOD. But there's a 'addock.

OWEN. Its presence had already dawned on me, but I won't come in to-night.

TOD. Something must 'ave upset 'im.

AMY. Uncle, I bought an evening paper.

TOD. Thank you, my dear. Is there anything special ?

AMY. They are calling out something. A great Bankruptcy, I think.

ROBERT enters with book which he gives to AMY. She sits on sofa and reads. He exits.

TOD. Oh, that might 'appen to anybody. There's nothing special in that. Is the tea made, my dear? (*sits L. C.*)

BLA. It will be in a minute. (*he opens paper and reads. After a pause* BLANCHE rises and goes softly to the shop door) Mr. Owen!

OWEN. (*appearing*) Yes, Miss Chilworth.

BLA. Won't you—come in—to tea with us?

OWEN. You are very kind, but—I think not, thanks.

BLA. Because of—of—what I said to you?

OWEN. Yes.

BLA. But if I told you I was—sorry—that I spoke without thought or reason, would you forgive me? I want you—if you will—to tell me about—the—Christmas cards. I am beginning to see that you were right and that I was wrong. (*she moves slowly to fireplace, then looks back at him*) Won't you come?

OWEN. (*advances to her*) I will—on one condition. (*ROBERT closes curtains*)

BLA. What is that?

OWEN. That you'll let me lift the kettle off for you.

BLA. (*sitting at tea tray and smiling*) Very well. Take care not to burn your fingers.

OWEN. Burn my fingers! (*bus*) Ah! I'm afraid that piece of excellent advice comes too late.

BLA. I don't understand.

OWEN. Don't you, (*their eyes meet and she slowly turns her head away*)

TOD. (*putting down newspaper*) Ah, Owen, that's right. Thought better of it. (*crosses to R. C. table taking candle*) Come, Amy, draw up. (*she goes to top of R. C. table*) Now, my dears, a morsel of 'addock? (*TODMAN begins to carve. BLANCHE holds out tea-pot into which OWEN pours water from kettle. ROBERTS' head appears again at back*)

CURTAIN.

SECOND CURTAIN:—BLANCHE pouring out tea. OWEN cutting loaf. TODMAN is waving ROBERT away with dish cover.

QUICK CURTAIN.

ACT III.

A month has elapsed. It is the evening of BLANCHE'S birthday. The shutters are up and the gas is alight in shop, passage and room. As curtain rises ROBERT pushes back curtain of shop.

OWEN opens side door with latchkey, and comes down passage, which is also lighted. He enters with his collar turned up, and carries a bunch of flowers in his hand. He crosses to fireplace, laying down flowers on table. He then stands before fire shaking the wet from his coat. ROBERT comes into room. He has a large key in one hand and a novel in the other.

ROB. Come on to rain, sir? (*stares at the flowers*)

OWEN. Yes, Mr. Binks. There is nothing abnormal in the occurrence. Have you—— Don't stare at the flowers—they're not for Miss Amy—they're for Miss Blanche—it's her birthday. Have you locked the shop door? (*puts flowers on machine*)

ROB. Yes, sir.

OWEN. All right. Hang the key on its usual nail, (*ROBERT does so*) Thank you. Well, Mr. Binks, (*leaning his back against mantelpiece*) you were telling me your views as to a future career have been modified lately?

ROB. Yes. (*stands R. C.*)

OWEN. Study of the *Boys' Penny Weekly* rather inclined you at one time towards piracy as a profession, didn't it?

ROB. (*gloomily*) Yes, but that's off, sir. I want to be an author!

OWEN. Really! Authorship—not piracy; but I've been told it's quite possible to blend the two. (*lights candle on mantel*)

ROB. I don't know, sir. I don't care what I am or what I do, every one is against me. (*moves L. C.*)

OWEN. To hear you one would suppose you had already published something. You're not well. I know the malady. It comes midway between measles and manhood. But now, isn't Miss Amy rather young for you? Why, at your age—fourteen?—(*ROBERT nods*) fourteen—

I wouldn't have looked at anybody younger than Crafer for instance. By the way, Crafer as a majestic alternative eh? (ROBERT *shakes his head*). No? Well I only threw her out as a mild suggestion. What's that book?

ROB. Mr. Harringay left it for Miss Amy.

OWEN. Oh! (*taking it*) Very well, I'll give it her. A leaf turned down, I see. Ah! when we handle our day book we are all apt to commit the folly of turning down the corner of some usually unimportant page; still, it's generally possible with a little strength of mind, Mr. Binks, to turn it up again.

ROB. Yes, Mr. Owen, one can turn it up, but it leaves a crease! Don't it? (*goes up*) Good-night, sir. (*exits*)

OWEN. Good-night. Leaves a crease—yes—my distinguished colleague is right there—it leaves a crease. (*he has opened book carelessly*) I thought Mr. Harringay intended to honor us this evening, and if so why this book? A sentence underlined: (*reads aloud*) "It must be to-night." Ah! that's why the page is turned down—a new form of cryptogram—"It must be to-night."—What must be to-night?

Enter TODMAN; he carries a work-box containing cards.

TOD. Well, Owen, there you are, eh? (*goes C.*) A dreadful thing 'as 'appened: Crafer 'as struck! (*going to top of R. C. table*) She refuses to cut any sandwiches. I don't believe she'll open the door to anybody.

OWEN. Oh, I'll go and talk to her. (*moves up*)

TOD. There's the pack of cards I told you of. My poor 'Arriet locked them up in her work-box twenty years ago and always kept the key. Ickson likes a game of whist. (*puts box on machine*)

OWEN. (*sits R. C.*) Is the pack perfect?

TOD. There may be a card or two missing—still—fair for everybody you know.

OWEN. I'll count them. (TODMAN *groans*) Is anything the matter?

TOD. I wouldn't have the dear girls know for the world. I've got a secret.

OWEN. Never mind that. Many distinguished people have a secret. Think of Lady Audley. There, you needn't tell me, Mr. Todman—it's a case of Briginshaw, isn't it?

TOD. Hsh—yes—'ow did you guess—it's an old debt—a 'eavy debt—'e 'as to know to-night. (*crosses to L. of him.*)

OWEN. To know what?

TOD. Sh. There's some one coming (*bending over him*) It must be to-night.

OWEN. Must be to-night! That phrase seems to bear a general application. (*rises and goes R. of R. C. table*)

Enter BLANCHE, L. C.

BLA. (*smiling*) Well, uncle. (*glancing at TODMAN*) Is anything the matter?

OWEN. A bad attack of Crafer.

TOD. My dear, there was a little trifle I want you to do me the honor of accepting—it being your first birthday—

BLA. I'm older than that, uncle.

TOD. Your first! under my roof. (*crossing up L. C.*) It's in the nature of jewelry. I'll go and fetch it, my dear. Older than your first birthday, ha! ha! ha! (*exits L. C.* BLANCHE *goes to R. C. table.*)

BLA. Is that a pack of cards, Mr. Owen?

OWEN. Yes, I promised to count them.

BLA. Shall I help you? (*sits R. C.*)

OWEN. You're very kind. (*they both count out cards*) That reminds me—how do the Christmas cards go?

BLA. Oh, capitally.

OWEN. And how do they go off.

BLA. I've sold another dozen. I shall soon have made enough to buy Amy a dress.

OWEN. Have you a knave of hearts among yours?

BLA. No. (*searching*)

OWEN. I've got him. Mr. Harringay is coming to-night, isn't he.

BLA. I think so, why?

OWEN. I wasn't quite sure. He's leaving England shortly.

BLA. Yes.

OWEN. Ah! How many?

BLA. (*giving her cards*) Eighteen.

OWEN. And thirty-four. Fifty-two—right.

BLA. Mr. Owen—was that trouble of my uncle's—when I came in only Crafer?

OWEN. She has declined to cut any sandwiches.

BLA. Really?

OWEN. And something has gone wrong with the boiler. (*rise, move to flowers*)

BLA. Again. Why it was only seen to on Tuesday.

OWEN. No! but you know I always tell you this is the age of disillusion. (*rising and getting the bunch of flowers*)

BLA. I know you always say so, but I don't believe it. What pretty flowers!

OWEN. I thought perhaps in honor of the occasion I might venture—you would permit.

BLA. Are they for me? (OWEN *bows*) Oh how kind of you. I love flowers. Thank you. (*taking them*) Your sleeve is quite damp—did you go out on purpose to fetch them? (OWEN *bows smilingly*) In the rain?

OWEN. In the rain—why not?

BLA. You are false to your own sorrowful creed. There is very much in this age which is kind and generous—why, to deny it would be to blind oneself to the existence of all friendship—all sympathy.

OWEN. Sympathy between us?

BLA. That is not—quite—kind. I hoped you had forgotten.

OWEN. A good memory is my only safeguard.

BLA. I have thought during the past weeks that we were beginning to understand each other better.

OWEN. Have you? And yet there are some things it would be madness for me to forget.

BLA. What are they?

OWEN. They might be summed up in two words—your pride.

BLA. Am I so proud?

OWEN. May I reply with an inquiry?

BLA. Certainly.

OWEN. A daring one?

BLA. Yes.

OWEN. Could you marry a man who was not your equal? (*pause*)

BLA. No, Mr. Owen—I could not marry a man—unless I considered him my equal.

OWEN. I knew it. Oddly enough, there is one form of pride with which even I sympathize.

BLA. What is that?

OWEN. The pride that forbids a man to use the accident of birth or fortune in his endeavour to gain a woman's love. I would owe nothing to either. You were kind enough to say you had hoped we were beginning to understand each other better.

BLA. (*sadly*) Yes—but now—I fear we never shall.

OWEN. Too clear an understanding between us might not be well for your happiness, or my self-respect. (*crosses back of chair to C.*)

BLA. Surely, there is no reason—why we should not be friends?

OWEN. (*reflectively*) Friends!

BLA. Is there? (*slight pause*)

OWEN. I'm afraid there is— (*hastily*) Miss Chilworth, I'm going away.

BLA. Going away? Soon?

OWEN. Very soon (*smiling*) Remember I have been neglecting the claims of my commercial career.

BBA. And you would be—absent—for some time?

OWEN. For many years.

BLA. (*dreamily*) For many years. (*slight pause*) Well, I suppose Liberty Hall implies perfect freedom—to come—or go—still I am sorry.

OWEN. Thank you.

Enter TODMAN, L. C.

TOD. Nobody come yet? I 'aven't opened the sherry. Entertaining is nervous work, ain't it.

OWEN. Paralysing. I'll go and cut the sandwiches (*goes up*) I shall be back directly. (*exit L. C.*)

TOD. My dear, (*sits in R. C. chair*) 'ere's that little matter of jewelry, (*produces it*) a brooch—it belonged to my poor 'Arriet—it's the portrait of my grandfather set round with garnets. Wonderful likeness, you might swear to the waistcoat. The garnets 'aven't responded to the wash leather to the extent I could have wished—but you'll overlook that, I daresay.

BLA. Thank you, uncle, indeed I shall value it very much, but is there no one with a better right? (*leaning over top of table. She afterwards looks in glass and puts on brooch*)

TOD. No, my dear, I never 'ad any children.

BLA. (*stoops and kisses him*) Never till now.

TOD. Bless you, my dear. You've paid too big a price for it. (*aside*) I must try and tell her about Briginshaw. (*aloud*) I'm afraid I shall have to say a word to you about a rather unpleasant—I mean a—in fact I've promised to speak to you about a little matter—that—(*aside*) I can't do it.

BLA. (*coming R. C.*) Don't hesitate to trust me.

TOD. Well, 'ave you ever thought of getting married?

BLA. Married?

TOD. A good many people do, you know.

BLA. But why do you ask?

TOD. Well, suppose now—that somebody—who don't feel inclined to name it to you 'imself wanted to marry you—somebody who is bashful—at least I oughtn't to say that—because, if there's one thing 'e ain't it's bashful—but still, somebody who isn't quite your equal, being in a manner connected with trade——

BLA. (*smiling*) Yes!

TOD. What would you say?

BLA. (*has taken up the flowers*) I don't know. (*moves slowly across to L. C.*) It would depend—it might be that he thinks too highly of me—or too modestly—of himself.

TOD. No, 'e don't—that ain't 'im at all, but 'e's well to do—'e could give you plenty of solid comfort.

BLA. Indeed?

TOD. Oh, yes, Briginshaw is a coming-on man.

BLA. Mr. Briginshaw! Were you alluding to him?

TOD. Yes, my dear!

BLA. Then I must ask you to tell Mr. Briginshaw that I should consider his proposal degrading if it were not so utterly preposterous.

TOD. (*dazed*) Utterly preposterous!

BLA. And that he is so far fortunate that his presumption inspires no stronger feeling than contempt. (*she crosses to piano*)

TOD. (*vaguely*) Oh, my goodness 'ow am I to tell im? Utterly presumption preposterous contempt—oh, my goodness!

AMY. (*entering*) Well, uncle, how do you think I look?

TOD. (*absently*) Utterly preposterous.

AMY. What, uncle?

TOD. Don't mind me, my dear, I'm a little put out.

OWEN *enters with tray of sandwiches.*

OWEN. There! not so bad for a first attempt.

AMY. What's that, Mr. Owen?

OWEN. The sandwiches. How do you think they look?

AMY. Very tempting, but thick.

OWEN. Thick! That's hypercriticism—it was a new loaf. (*moves to TODMAN*) What do you think of my sandwiches?

TOD. (*still in R. C. chair*) Utterly preposterous.

OWEN. (*going up stage*) Let's make a supper table of the counter. (*goes into shop*)

AMY. (*getting cloth and helping OWEN*) Was Crafer hospitable?

OWEN. Moderately.

AMY. She's a strange woman. I wonder sometimes if she's had a past.

OWEN. You'd better go to the top of the kitchen stairs and ask her.

TOD. I shall have to tell 'im—'e'll get violent and spoil the evening. Oh, my goodness!

OWEN. (*from shop*) Mr. Todman, the sherry.

TOD. Eh? Oh, yes, (*rising*) I was forgetting. (*goes to lower cupboard and takes out bottle*) Where's the corkscrew? Oh, 'ere. (*inserts corkscrew*) I 'ope it's good. Gilbey never deceived me as yet. I'm a bit behind'and. (*bell rings*; TODMAN *pauses with bottle between his knees*) There's the bell.

OWEN. The bell, Mr. Todman.

TOD. Yes. Now I wonder if she'll open the door. It'll be very awkward if she won't. (*bell rings again*)

TOD. Very awkward—it's a wet night too.

OWEN. Shall I go?

TOD. No—I'll go—don't you trouble—I'll go. (*he goes into passage, still holding bottle by corkscrew*)

AMY. I wonder who it is—Gerald perhaps.

TOD. (*opens door*) Ah, 'Ickson—glad to see you. Come in, Miss 'Ickson.

HICKSON *enters through street door.*

OWEN. By the way, Miss Amy, Mr. Harringay left this

book for you. (*takes it from machine and hands it to her*)

AMY. Thank you.

TOD. This way—my servant isn't quite herself.

Enters with MISS HICKSON on his arm, HICKSON following.

TOD. Miss 'Ickson—this is my niece Amy—and my niece Blanche. 'Ickson—this is my niece Blanche and my niece Amy. (*HICKSON crosses to top of R. C. table*)

TOD. Owen—'Ickson. (*goes down R.*)

OWEN. Happy to know you—rather a wet night.

HICK. Yeth.

OWEN. I beg your pardon? (*BLANCHE and MISS HICKSON move up to sofa*)

HICK. I thaid yeth.

OWEN. Quite so.

HICK. Agneth.

MISS H. Yeth.

HICK. Thit down! (*BLANCHE and MISS HICKSON sit on sofa. HICKSON sits in chair which he has taken from R. C. and placed top of table*)

AMY. (*having read book*) It must be to-night! (*OWEN watches her*)

TOD. 'Ickson—you'd like a glass of wine. I was just going to— (*same business; bell rings*) There's the bell again. Very awkward.

OWEN. Let me, Mr. Todman.

TOD. No—I'll go. (*again wanders off with bottle*)

AMY. Gerald perhaps—oh, what shall I do?

OWEN. (*to her*) I beg your pardon. (*OWEN afterwards gives an apple on plate to MISS HICKSON, who is still seated on sofa*)

AMY. I didn't speak, Mr. Owen.

TOD. (*outside*) Ah, Briginshaw—come in.

BRIG. Beastly night—ain't it? (*BLANCHE rises and goes towards piano*)

BRIG. Bound to be wet because I bought a new umbrella.

TOD. (*coming into room*) You 'aven't opened it.

BRIG. You don't catch me opening 14s. 6d. the first day.

TOD. My dears—'ere's Briginshaw.

BRIG. (*to BLANCHE*) Good evening, Miss (*BLANCHE bows and turns away coldly*) Ah, Toddy, that reminds me I want a few words with you, extra particular.

TOD. (*aside*) Oh my goodness! (*aloud*) Let me introduce you to Miss 'Ickson, Mr. Briginshaw. (*MISS HICKSON rises and curtseys*) This is 'Ickson. Owen, you know Briginshaw.

OWEN. I have that honor.

BRIG. Now, Todman, about that— (*bell rings*)

TOD. Excuse me, Briginshaw.

BRIG. Why can't the servant go?

TOD. She ain't quite 'erself—she'll have to see a doctor. (*going*) Something gone wrong with the boiler. (*He exits. BRIGINSHAW goes over to BLANCHE*)

BRIG. Well, Miss, I haven't wished you many happy returns of the day. (*she looks at him vaguely*) I said many happy returns of the day.

BLA. Thank you. (*rising*) Excuse me. (*turns away*)

BRIG. (*aside*) Oh, dash it all. (*moves over to fireplace*)

TOD. (*in passage*) Step in, Mr. 'Arringay.

AMY. (*who is C.*) Gerald at last. (*crosses to BLANCHE*)

TOD. (*entering room*) Come in Mr. 'Arringay.

Enter GERALD, L. C.

TOD. The ladies you know, all but Miss 'Ickson. This is Miss 'Ickson.

GER. Charmed.

TOD. Owen, you know. (*they nod*) 'Ickson and Briginshaw. (*GERALD crosses to BLANCHE*)

BLA. Ah, Gerald. (*they shake hands*)

GER. This is a farewell visit. I'm leaving England to-morrow.

OWEN. (*aside*) And therefore it must be to-night. (*BRIG. comes back of table to C. and says to TODMAN, who is crossing into shop*) Who's he?

TOD. 'Igh family—son of a Lord. (*goes into shop*)
BLANCHE joins MISS H. on sofa. OWEN talks to them.
AMY sits L. of L. C. table. GERALD sits L. C.)

BRIG. Devil he is. (*moves to GERALD*) Glad to know you, sir. (*GERALD doesn't hear*) We're having nasty weather, sir.

GER. (*turning round*) Eh! No doubt, Mr. Hickson. (*turns away again*)

BRIG. Not Hickson. (GERALD takes no notice. BRIG. taps his shoulder) Not Hickson.

GER. (*turning again*) Eh? Not what?

BRIG. Not Hickson, I'm Briginshaw. (TODMAN puts bottle on machine and brings sandwiches down to R. C.)

GER. Oh, I beg Mr. Hickson's pardon. (*turns again to AMY*)

BRIG. Now, sir, as one who is connected with the House of Lords I should like your opinion on a burning question. Between the recent action of the House of Commons and the House of Lords there is a difference, what is the difference? (*taps GERALD'S shoulder, who turns*) I say, sir, what is the difference between the House of Lords and——

GER. (*rises*) Never guessed one in my life, Mr. Hickingshaw. (*goes back of L. C. table*)

BRIG. Scissors! Do you know who I am? (TOD. goes to him and takes him across to R. of R. C. table)

TOD. We're going to 'ave a friendly game of whist. Briginshaw, come and cut in. I 'aven't played whist for twenty years. Now, 'Ickson.

TOD. Miss 'Ickson, you'll play? (*takes her to table*) Mr. 'Arringay, will you join? (*going to him*)

GER. Not for worlds—I mean—my whist education has been neglected. (BLANCHE rises and goes into shop.

BRIG. has seated himself with his back to fire. HICKSON is seated with back to shop. MISS H. standing R. C.)

BRIG. Now, Todman, cut.

TOD. I'm not what you might call a dab at it. (*goes to back of R. C. table*)

HICK. Agneth!

MISS H. Yeth! (*they cut for partners*)

HICK. Thit down.

MISS H. I can't thit down.

HICK. Why can't you thit down?

MISS H. Becauthe I don't know where to thit.

TOD. We shall want more chairs.

OWEN. Allow me. (*fetches a chair out of shop and places it at foot of table for MISS H. He then gets stool on which TODMAN perches himself. He and BRIG. are partners*)

BRIG. It's Todman's deal.

HICK. Yeth. (TODMAN *deals very awkwardly*)

GER. (*aside to AMY*) Then you got the book.

AMY. (*nervously*) Yes.

GER. And understood what I meant by the sentence, "It must be to-night."

AMY. Yes. (OWEN *glances at them now and then*) But I can't—oh, Gerald, how can you ask me! (*during this OWEN gets lighted candles from mantel and puts them on R. C. table. He then rejoins BLANCHE*)

GER. I am obliged to leave England to-morrow—a week sooner than I expected—you know you promised.

AMY. I never promised to go like this—you don't mean really to-night?

GER. I'm obliged to mean it. We should cross by early boat.

AMY. Oh, no, no.

GER. And be married at the English church to-morrow.

AMY. Gerald, it's impossible—it's—

BRIG. A miss-deal—anybody could see it would be—fumbling the cards like that.

TOD. Did I fumble? I 'aven't got into the swing of it.

BRIG. Oh, no, it's all right.

AMY. And Blanche?

GER. She could join us later on. Well, what do you say?

AMY. Oh, I don't know.

TOD. Hearts are trumps.

GER. There, the card-table has answered for you. (BLANCHE *goes to piano*)

BRIG. You've put your ace on my king.

TOD. I played my 'ighest—I was third player.

BRIG. Tcha! (BLANCHE *plays*)

GER. After they've gone to bed I'd come back and fetch you. I'd have a cab waiting. Is there any way of getting in here again? The side door?

AMY. It's always bolted.

GER. And the shop, is that impossible?

AMY. Robert always locks it, and hangs the key on that nail.

GER. Which nail?

AMY. Over there. (*pointing*) But, Gerald, this is all folly, madness. I can't. (*AMY rises and crosses front of table to C. GERALD gets R. of her. OWEN crosses to BLANCHE*)

BRIG. Odd trick and two by honours.

HICK. Honours are eathy.

BRIG. No.

HICK and MISS H. Yeth. (*the hubbub is kept up at R. C. table and TODMAN hands round sandwiches which are refused. GERALD then continues*)

GER. Have you decided? Will you keep your promise?

AMY. Oh, I don't know.

GER. If I come back later will you listen to me?

AMY. How can I?

GER. Well, I shall chance it. I shall come. (*crosses round R. C. table. AMY goes to door, taking book*)

BLA. Where are you going, dear?

AMY. I won't be long. My head is aching. (*exits L. C.*)

OWEN. 'The effect of unwonted dissipation. (*GERALD strolls over to card table*) Miss Chilworth. (*BLANCHE looks astonished*) I don't think your sister looks well or happy.

BLA. Oh, Mr. Owen. (*stops playing*) don't tell me you think she is ill.

OWEN. I am not quite sure that Mr. 'Arringay is the best physician obtainable.

BLA. I'll go to her. (*rises*)

OWEN. Do! Sisterly sympathy is a wonderful medicine. (*he opens the door, she exits. During this GERALD has been approaching the nail. He takes the key just as OWEN shuts door with slight noise*)

GER. Eh? (*TODMAN turns his stool twice*)

BRIG. What's that for?

TOD. For luck.

HICK. Play the game, sir.

GER. Has Blanche gone? (*this to OWEN who has come L. C.*)

OWEN. Yes, to her sister.

BRIG. (*loudly*) Any fool might have seen I hadn't any.

GER. (*aside to OWEN*) Does he mean manners? Pleasant gentleman, your semi-co-operative friend.

OWEN. Very.

GER. (*looks at his watch*) Later than I thought. I shall have to be going. Will you make my apologies all round—including the card table? I hate to interrupt a game of any sort, don't you?

OWEN. It a little depends on the *nature* of the game. However, I'll deliver your message.

GER. (*going up to L. C. door*) Don't you come. I know my way. (*OWEN follows him and helps him with boat. He exits. During this TODMAN, after much deliberation, plays a card. The HICKSONS laugh. BRIGINSHAW rises and scowls at them. OWEN returns to room and crosses to top of R. C. table. He says: "Is the game over?"*)

TOD. It's Briginshaw's lead off.

BRIG. I lead a spade. (*sitting again*)

HICK. A thpade! You trumped thpades just now.

BRIG. Do you mean to say I've revoked?

HICK. Yeth.

TOD. Yes, I think you revoked a little.

BRIG. Prove it. I never did such a thing in my life. You prove it. Show me the trick.

HICK. (*rises and turns over the cards*) There—that's your theven—you trumped the thpade. (*the others rise also and gaze intently at centre of table*)

BRIG. No.

HICK. Yeth!

BRIG. No.

MISS H. Yeth.

BRIG. (*throwing down cards*) Rot! Pack of trumped up lies! (*MISS HICKSON sits*)

TOD. My dear Briginshaw!

BRIG. You shut up.

TOD. 'Ave a sandwich? (*holds out plate*)

BRIG. Sandwich be blowed. (*MISS HICKSON rises*)

HICK. Agneth, thit down. (*she does so*)

OWEN. Don't break up the evening. Let me pour sherry on the troubled waters. Mr. Briginshaw will apologize. (*has taken up bottle and glass from machine, comes down to top of R. C. table*)

BRIG. Mr. Briginshaw will see you all——

HICK. (*hastily clapping his hand over BRIG.'s mouth*) Agneth put on your things. (*she moves away from*

table and crosses to piano where she takes up her bonnet and goes towards door L. C. HICKSON moves C. OWEN attempts to conciliate him)

TOD. Oh, Miss 'Ickson! (*follows her*)

BRIG. Mr. Briginshaw hasn't played whist for thirty years to be told he's revoked by a muddle-headed lispig fossil.

HICK. Lithping fothil! How dare you thay I lithp. Come straight home, Agneth. (*takes her arm*) Good-night, Mithter Todman. Thankth you for your pleathant hothpitality. (*they exit slamming the door in TODDY'S face. He rushes to save the eight day clock from falling*)

BRIG. A good riddance—an infernal good riddance. Now then, Todman, (*calls*) Todman, I want you. (*TODMAN returns sadly*) I've been waiting all the evening to have a word with you. I mean to have it now—and (*looking at OWEN*) in private. Well, sir, (*to OWEN*) you heard what I said.

OWEN. It's not easy to avoid hearing what you say, unfortunately.

BRIG. I said in private.

OWEN. By all means, (*rising and picking up stool*) I'll go into the shop. Mr. Todman, I'll keep within call, because I may wish to have a word later on. (*goes into shop, afterwards closing curtains*)

BRIG. (*risés and goes L. C.*) Now, what's the answer to that offer of mine?

TOD. (*standing up L. C.*) She's—she's aware of the honour of your proposal—

BRIG. Well?

TOD. (*slowly coming down L. of L. C. table*) Which but for circumstances over which she had no contrôl, and wishing you every success in your new provision department, the idea of 'er marrying you was—

BRIG. (*smiling expectantly*) What?

TOD. Utterly preposterous!

BRIG. Eh?

TOD. Utterly impossible, I mean.

BRIG. Then look here—if that money isn't paid down to-morrow on the nail, I'll put a man in, d'ye hear? I will, if I bring you to a half-penny in the pound.

TOD. Very well, Briginshaw. What must be, must. (*with a momentary assumption of exaggerated dignity*)

he moves to R. of table, then breaks down) You'll bear in mind what I said about the portrait and the bust.

BRIG. Bah! And you tell that precious puppy of yours, Owen, that he'd better look out for another kennel.

OWEN. *(entering)* Surely, I heard my name.

TOD. Briginshaw was saying——

BRIG. Mr. Briginshaw was saying he's master here—the whole bag of tricks is mine, lease, stock, furniture and good will.

OWEN. There's not much of that.

BRIG. And unless my money's paid to-morrow I put a man in.

TOD. It's true, Owen—this is a falling 'ouse.

OWEN. If that is so, and the proverbial rats are departing it would be inappropriate to detain Mr. Briginshaw.

BRIG. Eh?

OWEN. To-morrow you may have the chance of putting a man *in*—to-night I enjoy the privilege of putting a man *out*. Mr. Briginshaw, your hat and new umbrella are in the passage. You'll find the door open quite easily, because the lock was oiled only yesterday. Kindly go at once, and quietly, or else——

BRIG. Or else what? *(turning fiercely)*

OWEN. *(with quiet emphasis)* Or else, I may be tempted to share in your forgetfulness that there are ladies in this house. You understand me, no doubt. Good-evening. *(BRIGINSHAW looks at him for a second and then goes out banging the door after him. TODMAN covers his face with his hands)* Come, Mr. Todman, don't give way.

TOD. It's all over, Owen—all over. 'E'll sell me up—it's all over now.

OWEN. Come, come, remember my account is due to you to-morrow. *(goes R., taking chair with him)*

TOD. Oh, that's nothing.

Enter BLANCHE, L. C.

BLA. Every one gone?

TOD. You see, my dear, Briginshaw and 'Ickson 'ad a word—or two—and that broke up the party. I'm afraid it's been a poor kind of an evening. Owen, no one had any sherry. *(rises and goes C.)*

OWEN. No, Mr. Todman, but I wish you would have a little now—do—it's a duty to Gilbey. (*brings bottle c.*)

TOD. No, I don't feel to want it—I'll go to bed if you'll excuse me. I'm just a little 'ipped and tired—I think I'll take Pickwick up with me. (*goes to small book-case above couch and takes book*)

OWEN. (*to TODMAN*) Miss Chilworth will give you an arm upstairs; it's just that kind of weariness that needs a woman's arm for support. Good-night, Miss Chilworth.

BLA. Good-night.

TOD. It 'asn't been a rollicking birthday—not a sandwich eaten, (*OWEN holds up plate, and with mock ruefulness says "No"; he then puts sandwiches into lower cupboard; afterwards getting writing materials from machine*) and (*to BLANCHE*) your 'ealth wasn't even drunk. I meant to 'ave asked 'Ickson to propose it, but it's no use now. Good-night, Owen. You'll put the gas out: Good-night. (*TODMAN and BLANCHE exit*)

OWEN. Poor little fellow. Fortunately I can set matters right. Liberty Hall shall retain its title. (*goes into shop and turns out gas there. He then re-enters room closing door after him. Is about to turn out chandelier, but his attention is diverted by seeing the flowers that BLANCHE has forgotten to take lying on L. C. table*) She has forgotten my flowers. Ah! it's quite time I resumed my own identity among the Himalayas. There is no reason why we should not be friends! Since the world began, thousands of women must have made that consoling suggestion to millions of men, but the alternative has never become popular. Friends! Well, I must make out my account. (*he has put cards away and placed writing materials on table*) Now then, six months' occupancy of second floor back—what shall I put down—£500? It has no fireplace and the window wouldn't open, even before the cord broke, also the proverb "As you make your bed so you must lie in it" is one that I have had frequent occasion to verify—still let's say £500. Board? Hum! I think £200 would be enough for board. Then what else?—ah the cost of new—comparatively new, wash-hand stand—say £150. It really looks wonderfully like mahogany—five hundred—two hundred—one fifty—eight fifty—just the sum needed. And I have omitted occasional use of parlour, and what an item that has been.

The occasional opportunity of saying the wrong thing to her—the occasional chance of renewing the certainty that I am nothing to her—and never could be anything—and yet the chance of being near her—of hearing her voice. Ah, no. If I attempted payment I should be bankrupt. Occasional use of parlour must remain priceless. What else? Cheque of course. (*writes cheque*) Todman or bearer—Hartley O. Chilworth. Signing my own name for once gives me quite a sensation of forgery—there! that ends it. To-morrow the guardian angel will spread his wings, wings that resemble the moths in their capacity for being singed. How about Mr. Harringay's unsolved cryptogram—"It must be to-night"? He can't be coming back by any chance. Impossible! The side door is fastened and Robert locked the shop and put the key—Eh? What! Gone! O, that's it, is it? Well! Then why doesn't he come? It's getting late. Ah, the place is still lighted up. We must rectify that. (*turns out chandelier. Takes candle from table and exits into passage. Turns out gas there and waits, shading candle with his hand*) Now then to see this through. The guardian angel is still on active duty. (*click of lock*) Hush! what's that?—the shop door as I thought. (*GERALD enters cautiously, removes key and locks door on inside; he advances but stumbles*) He's breaking his shins among the old quartos.

GER. (*opens glass door*) At last—are you there, Amy?

OWEN. (*entering room*) No, Mr. Harringay, Miss Amy Chilworth is not here. You must permit me to do the honours.

GER. You?

OWEN. Yes, I usually put out the gas. My doing so to-night has had the paradoxical effect of throwing light on what was till now obscure. Did you lock the shop door when you came in? I shouldn't care to deal with more than one burglar at a time.

GER. Burglar!

OWEN. Burglar!

GER. Do you think I came here to steal something?

OWEN. I'm sure you did.

GER. What do you mean, sir?

OWEN. You appear to be a little sensitive to the epithet "Burglar." (*comes down and puts candle on L. C.*

table) Midnight plunder need not entail the centre-bit and crowbar. You came here, if I am not mistaken, to induce a romantic girl to leave her home.

GER. (*contemptuously*) Home! (*moves down R.*)

OWEN. How else would you describe shelter in adversity? You came here to take her—steal would be a better word—from a sister who has no hope—no love—that is not bound up in that foolish child. This theft—yes, Mr. Harringay, theft—may not be punishable by law, but still it seems to me a crime.

GER. (*moves C.*) Sir, you have the reputation, I think, of being mixed up with trade in some way.

OWEN. I have.

GER. Well, then, may I suggest, in the interest of your business, whatever it may be, that for the future you confine your attention to minding it. This question is one that I might discuss with a gentleman.

OWEN. Ah, that would make a wonderful difference, (*sits on arm of L. C. chair*) no doubt, but at the present moment I merely lay claim to the character of watchdog, a post in which teeth are more essential than breeding. Your—not very manly—taunt comes fitly from an individual who has just committed a mean action in a mean way.

GER. Who dares to say so?

OWEN. I do.

GER. It's a lie.

OWEN. Indeed! Then we are both dreaming, and the shop door key has no existence. (*slight pause*)

GER. I entirely deny your right to interfere, but as Miss Amy Chilworth may suffer for my silence I will say that it was, and is, my intention to marry that lady at once.

OWEN. Would you tell this story to her sister?

GER. I will, if necessary, tell it to my own father; (*moves R.*) the secrecy and all the rest of it is his fault. We should have been married to-morrow at Calais, in the English church there; that's the whole of it—what do you say?

OWEN. An elopement?

GER. Yes, why not?

OWEN. There is always this danger in elopements—that in the hurry of the moment, some important formality may be forgotten or neglected.

GER. I've just told you——

OWEN. I may have misjudged you, but in any case you can easily prove the honesty of your intentions.

GER. How?

OWEN. By going quietly away, then return to-morrow in the full light of day, enter this room—to do so you must pass through the shop! bear that in mind—and ask Miss Amy Chilworth in the presence of every one, to become your wife. Remember she is a lady of as gentle birth as your own; remember it is your duty to surround her good name with every safeguard, and remember also that her dead father loved and befriended you when you were a boy.

GER. (*loudly*) If I refuse to submit to your dictation?

OWEN. I should revert to my unflattering opinion.

GER. (*quietly*) And—if I come to-morrow.

OWEN. Then, Mr. Harringay, it would become my pleasant duty to ask your pardon. (*pause*)

GER. (*taking his hat*) Good-night, sir.

OWEN. Good-night. (*GERALD goes up, then pauses*)

GER. I'm sorry for what I said just now about your not being a—a——

OWEN. (*smiling*) Gentleman.

GER. Yes, it was a silly thing to say, and it hadn't even the merit of being true.

OWEN. I need no apology. (*takes candle and goes up stage. GERALD seems half inclined to offer his hand, but checks himself*)

GER. Good-night.

OWEN. I'll see you out. (*goes into shop*)

GER. (*following him*) Thanks! (*GERALD exits into street. OWEN remains at door looking after him. Slight pause*)

AMY enters timidly.

AMY. I don't hear any one, perhaps he won't come. Oh, I hope he won't (*OWEN shuts and locks door*) Ah! what's that; he's there—I can't—I daren't! (*OWEN stands in doorway*) Gerald.

OWEN. Not Gerald. (*hangs key on nail*)

AMY. Mr. Owen. (*starting back*)

OWEN. It's all right, Mr. Harringay came. We had a little chat and he's gone away again. (*moves down R. and puts candle on table*)

AMY. And did he tell you—do you—

OWEN. Oh, yes, I know all about it.

AMY. Mr. Owen, indeed I never meant to go. I thought it better to see him again for a minute to tell him—I—I—couldn't do what he wished.

OWEN. (*going to her*) Let me relieve you of that travelling cloak—it looks rather heavy. (*AMY drops cloak*)

AMY. What must you think of me?

OWEN. I think, Miss Amy, that you are a warm-hearted but not overwise little lady. There, let me pick up your silent witness. (*picks up cloak and puts it on table R. C.*)

AMY. I should have said no—indeed, I should.

OWEN. I'm quite sure you would—all the way to the station.

AMY. Mr. Owen—I—I—Oh! What can I say? What shall I do?

OWEN. You will go quietly back to your room, I hope, and try the effect of a night's rest.

AMY. You think badly of me, don't you? I feel you must, and yet something might be said for me, if I knew how to say it. Gerald has known us since we were children—and he has always—always cared for me.

OWEN. And you have always—always—

AMY. Yes, I think so.

OWEN. And your sister?

AMY. Blanche—oh no! she never knew—I have been afraid to tell her.

OWEN. Afraid!

AMY. She would never forgive me—she is severe, isn't she?

OWEN. (*smiling*) Yes, she is a little, sometimes—but never with you, I think. Really, in your place I should tell her the whole truth.

AMY. Oh, no, I couldn't—I daren't—Mr. Owen, *you* won't tell her, will you?

OWEN. Your secret is your own.

AMY. You promise?

OWEN. I promise.

AMY. Thank you. I know I can trust you.

OWEN. Oh yes, you may safely do that, but will you forgive me if I ask why your trust should be limited to a stranger? has your sister done so little in all these years to deserve your confidence, that you let your young lover draw his careless pen through the words of gratitude and duty?

AMY. Don't, for pity's sake! Can't you see that if Blanche knew I should die of shame? I know I've been weak—and wicked, very wicked, but I loved Gerald, and I have no mother—no mother. (*sits L. C. and covers her face with her hands*)

OWEN. Ah, don't cry, I ought to have remembered you are only a child. Come, little lady—do you know I should so like to look on you as a sister, but perhaps that would be presumption, so let's say cousin, shall we? (*kneels by her*) There, there, you have my promise—only don't cry. I can't bear to see a woman cry.

AMY. I can't help it.

BLANCHE *enters L. C. unperceived.*

OWEN. (*still kneeling*) No one will know—no one will know.

BLA. Amy! (*they both slowly rise*)

AMY. Blanche!

OWEN. Miss Chilworth. (*moves R. C.*)

BLA. What does this mean? Perhaps it is hardly necessary to ask.

AMY. Indeed I—I—

BLA. Go to your room, dear, you don't understand. Go to your room.

AMY. (*moves up C.*) Mr. Owen,—Blanche—what shall I do?

OWEN. (*very quietly*) I think it will be better to do as your sister wishes. (*gives her cloak*)

AMY. (*to BLANCHE*) I ought to tell you. I can't. I daren't. (*Exits L. C.*)

BLA. (*after a pause*) Now! What have you to say? Explanation seems impossible, but I am willing to listen. I am willing to try and believe you even against the evidence of my own senses. (*pause*) Do you hear me?

OWEN. (*standing R. C.*) Yes.

BLA. Then why don't you speak?

OWEN. Because, Miss Chilworth, I cannot.

BLA. You cannot!

OWEN. No.

BLA. It is true, then. I was not mistaken. I return to this room at midnight—to find my sister alone with you—to find her in tears—and to hear you take refuge in the coward phrase, “No one will know!” You will not attempt an explanation because you say you cannot. Ah—at last I understand. (*moves L.*)

OWEN. Miss Chilworth—

BLA. My sister—my timid, trusting sister; I had nothing but her love left to me in all the world, and you would have taught her to deceive me—perhaps as a prelude to the darker lesson of dishonor. (*goes C.*)

OWEN. Ah! you believe that of me?

BLA. What else can I believe? If not, why was my sister here with you? Can you answer?

OWEN. No—I cannot, I have given my word.

BLA. Your word! To whom? To conceal what? I’m mad to listen, and yet there was a time barely an hour ago, when I would have welcomed you as a friend, yes, I believed in your truth and loyalty. How you must have laughed at me. Well, you have gained your convert. I see at last that you are right, this is the age of disillusion.

OWEN. You are very cruel.

BLA. Cruel! My return to this room was not the outcome of any degrading doubt or suspicion—I came back here—because—I—had forgotten—your flowers. Yes, why should I deny it. I have known little sympathy in my sad and broken life, and—I valued—your flowers and wished to have them with me. (*taking them*) But the fitting place for such a treacherous gift is there (*letting them fall*) in the dust with the pride for which you have so often taunted me, but which must have been small indeed, since it could not conceal your power to wound me. (*pause.*)

OWEN. Miss Chilworth, no man can foretell his future, happily for him, but this, I think, I know, fate cannot have in store for me another hour of equal bitterness to this—I cannot reply to your charge because I have given my word to be silent. I know this is no answer, but this I can—this I will say—I am innocent, your imputation wrongs both of us.

BLA. Both of us.

OWEN. Yes—it wrongs me from the fact that it is false ; and, in the proof that so hideous a thought found entrance in your sweet and generous nature it wrongs you.

BLA. Then you deny——

OWEN. I deny everything—but I can prove nothing.

BLA. (*sadly*) Ah ! (*sits L. C.*)

OWEN. Meanwhile I owe it to my own self-respect that the same roof shall not cover us for another night or for another hour. Time may yet undeceive you—I will trust to time. I leave behind me many foolish hopes that I once dared to cherish. Like my flowers—they are fading—at your feet.

[*He goes into passage, takes hat and exits. She remains transfixed till the sound of street door shutting seems to rouse her. She makes a half movement to follow, pauses, looks down at flowers. After a struggle she stoops, picks them up, then with a low cry sinks on to sofa and buries her face in her hands.*]

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

Same scene. Early next morning. Stage is rather dark. CRAFER discovered fanning fire with her apron.

CRA. (*yawning*) Ugh ! nasty morning ! turned to frost. They're sure to be late after a party. Party, ugh ! sandwiches and one bottle of sherry ! Call that a party ! (*she brings out the sandwiches and sherry*) Why, they haven't touched 'em, nor the wine neither ! There's a wicked waste ! (*comes R. C., sits and pours out a glass*) I can't a-bear to see it ! There's many a poor (*drinks*) 'ard-worked creature (*drinks again*) as would be thankful of it ! (*finishes glass, then puts bottle and sandwiches on mantelpiece—a puff of smoke comes out ; she coughs*) Bless the smoke ! it's got down my throat ; it's that beastly register !

Enter TODMAN; he goes and sits disconsolately on stool R. C.

I've been telling Todman we want the sweep for the last twelvemonth, but that's the way with Todman, e'd sooner give a party than 'ave the sweep. (*brushing carpet*)

TOD. (*quietly*) Good-morning, Crafer.

CRA. Oh! Breakfast ain't ready, so you needn't expect it.

TOD. I don't expect anything!

CRA. We want the sweep.

TOD. Ah! I might 'ave expected that! (CRAFER *nods*) The wind's changed, there's a 'ard frost. The water jugs are frozen this morning, though I daresay you mayn't 'ave noticed it. (*during the next speech CRAFER gradually brushes her way towards him*) I 'aven't slept a wink—I've 'ad Briginshaw weighing me down all night like a lobster. (CRAFER *hits stool with broom*. TODMAN *risks and crosses L. C.* CRAFER *takes stool into shop, then goes L. to piano*) I suppose I'm in the way. I seem to 'ave been in the way for years. 'Ow am I ever to break the news to those dear girls? (*he moves to music stool L., is about to sit, when CRAFER takes it away, saying, "You can't have that."* TODMAN *replies, "No, I see I can't," and moves over front of table to C.* "Where am I to go?" *says he, and tries to get to sofa. CRAFER sweeps the dust in his face*) There's no 'ome where we can find shelter—no place where we—where we can go! (*moves over to top of R. C. table*) There'll soon be no snug parlour. (*he wanders to fire place*) No comfortable easy-chair. (CRAFER *tries to drag it away*) No, you don't. (*he prevents her from taking it and sits in it*) No cheerful fireside (*a puff of smoke comes out; he coughs, rises, and holds handkerchief to grate. CRAFER sweeps dust under sofa*) Ugh! Yes, I think we do want the sweep.

CRA. I should think we did! (*exits into passage*)

TOD. But there, it's Briginshaw's chimney now; it would be a liberty on my part to sweep Briginshaw's chimney, and it's pleasant to feel I needn't see to Briginshaw's boiler. (ROBERT *rings side bell*) I wonder if Crafer 'as found a situation yet—because, if not, I should

like to recommend 'er to Briginshaw; he 'asn't be'aved like a friend or I wouldn't do such a thing.

ROB. (*to CRAFER, who opens door for him*) Good-morning.

TOD. There's Robert!

Enter ROBERT and CRAFER. She goes towards piano and dusts.

Ah! Robert; good-morning, Robert! Just give me a hand with my cloak. (*ROBERT gets it from hat-rack*) I'm going out for a stroll before breakfast (*to ROBERT*) I don't know that you need take down the shutters to-day. (*puts on respirator*)

ROB. Not open the shop, sir?

TOD. (*dreamily*) No, I don't think so, not to-day. (*going up L. C.*)

CRA. Why, what'll the neighbours think? (*taking chair from L. C. table*)

TOD. I don't seem to care much what the neighbours think. They can think it's a bereavement. (*he goes out. Puff of smoke*)

ROB. (*after a pause*) What's the matter with the Governor?

CRA. 'Ow should I know? (*crosses R. and pulls chairs down from table*) 'E 'asn't been like the same man lately; 'e won't 'ave the boiler seen to—'e won't 'ave the sweep—'e don't seem to take a pleasure in nothing.

ROB. Was it a nice party?

CRA. Party! with only one bottle of sherry! Why, we did better than that when I buried my poor mother! (*OWEN opens side door with latch key*) Is that the side door?

ROB. What did Miss Amy wear?

CRA. Lor', don't bother me. (*crosses to piano, front of table*) Black, I think.

ROB. She must have looked lovely in black!

Enter OWEN, L. C.

ROB. Good-morning, sir.

OWEN. Good-morning, Robert. Well, Crafer, cleaning the room? That's unusual, isn't it?

CRA. Breakfast ain't ready. (*dusting chair extravagantly*)

OWEN. Ah ! that isn't unusual ! (*to ROBERT*) Why haven't you opened the shop ?

ROB. The Governor said I wasn't to.

OWEN. Did he ? Well, you can open the shop on my responsibility.

ROB. (*going*) Yes, sir !

OWEN. Robert, I am going away.

ROB. What, for good, sir ?

OWEN. For good ? Well, we must hope so. The most congenial colleagues must part sometimes, you know ; and so I want you to accept this trifle. (*giving him money*)

ROB. Thank you, sir, I'm much obliged. Did you have a pleasant evening, sir ? Miss Amy wore black, I hear, sir.

OWEN. White, I think.

ROB. Then I suppose, sir, Miss Blanche—

OWEN. (*turning away*) Take down the shutters.

ROB. Yes, sir. (*going*) White ! She must have looked lovely in white. (*takes key from nail and goes into shop. He afterwards takes down shutters and puts bell on door. When shutters are being taken down, lights to be gradually raised. Limes changed to amber*)

OWEN. (*to CRAFER*) I gather Mr. Todman is up ?

CRA. More down than up. 'E's gone out for a walk.

OWEN. Then I must leave my letter for him. Where will it catch his eye ? Ah ! his favorite object, of course ! There ! (*leans it against the bust of Charles Dickens*) I think if the great original could read the contents, he would pardon the liberty. Crafer, I'm leaving at once, my things can be sent after me. I suppose no one is stirring but Mr. Todman ?

CRA. Not likely, after a party !

OWEN. Oh ! there was very little dissipation. There are my sandwiches, I see—and the sherry too ! (*takes bottle*) is untasted. (*holds it to light*) Ahem ! was untasted ! (*CRAFER dusts piano vigorously*) Well, (*replacing it*) I shall slip out quietly when I come down. And so, Crafer, the moment of our leave-taking has come ; this small gratuity (*gives her money*) may go towards the expenses of one of those periodical interments that occur in your family.

CRA. Thank 'ee, sir ! (*going—pauses*) You don't

'appen to know any single gentleman in chambers who wants a general servant as would be a mother to him?

OWEN. No, I don't know any single gentleman sufficiently enterprising.

CRA. I've been accustomed to do for single gentlemen.

OWEN. Very likely.

CRA. Yes, sir. I was 'ousekeeper once to a commercial gent, who took to drink just as it might be yourself, sir. *(attempts to brush him with broom)*

OWEN. *(evading her)* Quite so.

CRA. Yes, sir—quite so. But I knowed my dooty, and took his cellar key away while 'e was unconscious on the 'earth-rug, and up to the time we parted, if you'll believe me, 'e never 'ad another drop. *(moves up L. C.)*

OWEN. I can quite believe you, Crafer. Good-day.

CRA. Good-day, sir. *(she exits)*

OWEN. *(looking at his watch)* Eight o'clock! I must collect my belongings—my small belongings. *(looks around)* A volume of Shelley, and—ah, yes—my old pipe, of course. *(takes it)* Companion at midnight, she never looked with much favor upon either of us, did she? And so your smoke had to be guided up the chimney, in spite of the reluctant register. *(moves down R., then across to L. C. table)* I wonder why I am staying here eating my heart out? I must try to forget her—among the Himalayas. Shall I?—I think I will. I think I must. *(takes a reel of cotton)*

Enter CRAFER, who moves to top of R. C. table.

Ah, Crafer, I'm going up now. *(he exits)*

CRA. I don't wonder at 'is leaving *(takes cloth from drawer and puts it on table)* The rag and bone man 'as dropped calling. Why, even our cat 'as bettered 'imself, and wears a collar now at number fifteen! I shan't put up with it much longer. I'd as lief go out charring without beer money, a'most, so I would.

BLANCHE enters slowly, L. C.

'Ullo! 'ere's another of 'em. I wonder they trouble to go to bed at all.

BLA. I fancied I heard some one stirring. *(moves R. C.)*

CRA. Your uncle was on the fidget; 'e got up early and went out.

BLA. Oh, I thought I heard someone go up the stairs. (*sits R. C.*) The footsteps seemed to stop at Mr. Owen's room; but perhaps I was mistaken.

CRA. No, you wasn't! 'E went up to 'is room to fetch something. 'E's been out all night.

BLA. I know; terrible.

CRA. Ah! if you'd waited on as many young men lodgers as I 'ave you'd think nothing of that. 'E's going away, 'e said.

BLA. Yes.

CRA. (*crossing back of her and whispering in her ear*) You'll 'ear 'im coming down directly. Shall I leave the door open?

BLA. Oh, no, you—you needn't do that!

CRA. All right. (*exit L. C., shutting door*)

BLA. Going away! Yes, in a few minutes he will have gone away for ever—without knowing—that—I know. Shall I let him go? If that door remains closed he will pass away out of my life. I need not open it—I need not—I—I will not! (*listening*) Is that his step! (*going towards door*) Yes, he's going. Ah, he must not go believing I wrong him! He shall not! (*throws open door and calls*) Mr. Owen! Mr. Owen! (*OWEN stands in the doorway*)

OWEN. You wish to speak to me, Miss Chilworth?

BLA. If you please. I—I have something I must try to say to you.

OWEN *bows and enters, closing the door. She moves down C., and looks at him.*

I know the truth, my sister has told me everything. You were right in trusting to time, it has soon avenged you.

OWEN. Miss Chilworth.

BLA. But I hope you will remember that chance did much to blind me and defame you. Will you remember that, and (*holding out her hand*) forgive me?

OWEN. (*takes her hand and speaks eagerly*) No, I cannot forgive you; your own heart should have told you your suspicion was impossible.

BLA. Impossible!

OWEN. Yes! Because, like Adam, my world contains only one woman! Blanche, need I tell you her name? You see it was better I should go. Good-by.

BLA. Good-by! You are leaving us? (OWEN bows)
Now?

OWEN. Surely, knowing everything, you would urge me to go.

BLA. But, suppose, knowing everything, I urged you to stay. (OWEN makes a startled movement) If I was blind last night, to-day my eyes are open. I see that I have read life wrongly from the first, that it is time I ceased to remember I am a Chilworth in learning its greatest lesson—in learning to be a woman. Ah, but I'm not perfect in my lesson yet. I still need a friend to teach me.

OWEN. I cannot be your friend, you know that. Will you answer me one question?

BLA. (*shyly*) I'll try.

OWEN. Will you be my wife? (*she turns half away*) You are silent, you wish to spare me. I might have guessed your answer.

BLA. I think perhaps you might; but you don't seem to (*he looks at her, she smiles. Takes her in his arms*)

OWEN. Blanche!

BLA. (*after a pause with her head on his left shoulder*) Is your question answered?

OWEN. (*looking down on her*) Inferentially.

BLA. Explicitly enough, I think. Now, sir, will you answer one of mine?

OWEN. (*imitating BLANCHE*) I'll try.

BLA. Are you still quite certain that this is the age of disillusion?

OWEN. Well, I have an uneasy conviction that I shall wake directly in the second floor back to find it all a dream; and yet (*putting his arm around her*) you appear tangible.

BLA. How we used to quarrel!

OWEN. Didn't we!

BLA. Do you think we shall quarrel when we are—in the future?

OWEN. I think it's within the bounds of reasonable probability. The future! Have you given any consid-

eration to the future? (*she puts her head on his left shoulder*) I should say not, judging by your present attitude.

BLA. Oh yes, I have! I suppose—I can only suppose because you have always been rather an enigma, Mr. Owen.

OWEN. Have I, Miss Chilworth?

BLA. You've never even told me your Christian name.

OWEN. No. (*looks away*)

BLA. Well.

OWEN. Well.

BLA. What is it?

OWEN. Let us speak of the future! (*takes her over to R. C. table*)

BLA. Our future! (*sits on R. C. chair, he on table by the side*) It must be one of struggle and hardship.

OWEN. Yes! and its exact nature——

BLA. That you must tell me.

OWEN. Must I? Well, what would you say, now, to a nice, snug little shop, with an equivalent back parlour to this one, furnished as far as our means allowed, on an equally lavish scale, and with another Crafer to—in her own words—do for us! The last detail is unimportant, because you would naturally do most of the cooking yourself.

BLA. (*very sadly*) I don't know how to cook.

OWEN. Oh, it'll come to you! Many little household economies become possible with judicious management. The washing, for example, could be done at home. Then there would be the making of all your wearing apparel.

BLA. Yes.

OWEN. And the occasional repairing of mine.

BLA. I know—I understand.

OWEN. And this life then—dull, dreary, squalid—you can face it?

BLA. Yes! I can face it—with you.

OWEN. Think how different it would be from the old life at Chilworth.

BLA. (*rising and placing her hand in his*) A woman's life only begins from the moment that she loves.

OWEN. (*eagerly*) Ah, Blanche! you have learned the great lesson. I see it's almost time I threw the spelling-book away.

Enter TODMAN, L. C.

TOD. (*he comes in with hat, cap and respirator still on. He advances to C. as if lost in thought*) Why, my dear, you're up early.

BLA. Yes, Uncle!

TOD. And you, too, Owen. (*takes off things and puts them on sofa*) My dear? (*BLANCHE moves towards him. He takes her hand. OWEN goes to fireplace*) There's something I must tell you. I 'ardly know 'ow to begin—I 'ardly know 'ow to ask your forgiveness.

BLA. Forgiveness, Uncle!

TOD. You see I lured you to this home under false pretences. I made out that I was respectable, but that was bounce—mere bounce—'opefulness has been the ruin of me—foolish 'opefulness—it's blinded me to the inevitable. Briginshaw is the inevitable; 'e 'olds a 'eavy debt over me; 'e's going to sell me up. I can't ask you to forgive me (*sits L. C.*)

BLA. Forgiveness! Ah, indeed! that word is needed, but not for you—for me—for me! (*kneeling beside him*) I wonder if I could tell you something that would make you less sad.

OWEN. (*at fireplace*) Try!

BLA. Well, listen! Some time later on, not yet awhile—oh, not nearly yet awhile, but later on—you may read in the papers that on the something instant a marriage was solemnised between Blanche Chilworth—

TOD. What, my dear?

BLA. And a gentleman whose Christian name is still unknown, but his other—can't you guess it—don't you see?

TOD. (*excitedly*) You don't mean——?

BLA. Yes.

TOD. Not——?

BLA. Yes.

TOD. Owen?

BLA. Yes.

TOD. Owen, my dear friend (*shakes hands with*

OWEN, *who has come to L. C.*) 'Eaven bless you—
'Eaven bless you both.

BLA. (*rises*) And are you happy and hopeful?

TOD. Yes, my dear (*rising and crossing C.*) I'm so happy that I shall drift into 'opetfulness again unless I'm very careful. My dear Blanche and Owen, under the existing 'appy circumstances, I daresay you'll 'ave no objection to excusing me for a minute. I shan't be long! (*going, pauses at shop door*) I don't know if you 'appened to notice that the shop door sticks as you open it and the 'andle rattles a good deal? It's of no consequence; but I've been young myself, and I—thought I'd mention it. (*exits into shop and goes to door looking out into street*)

BLA. Dear uncle! how happy he looks—and you, too, sir! do you know you look rather happy? Do you wear a large watch or is that a locket?

OWEN. It's a reel of cotton; it belongs to you. I stole it to take with me to the Himalayas.

BLA. The Himalayas! Were you going to my cousin Hartley?

OWEN. No other companionship was left to me.

BLA. There is another instance in which I have been wrong (*crossing and sitting L. C.*) I feel sure now that his offer to me was meant kindly. I wonder if he would forgive me.

OWEN. It's not impossible. What are you thinking?

BLA. I was thinking that when I marry—if I ever do, you know—

OWEN. Of course if you ever do!

BLA. I was thinking that I should like him to be present.

OWEN. Would you? That's very curious, do you know; so should I.

Enter AMY L. C.

Well, little lady (*AMY advances timidly*) And so you took my advice, and told the truth to a certain haughty relative of yours.

AMY. Yes, Mr. Owen; but she will never forgive me.

OWEN. Leave it to me. (*he goes R. C. She stands C. BLANCHE remains seated L. C.*) My little client desires to plead guilty to having concealed from her sister the

fact that she—my client—had formed an attachment to a young gentleman, but I would venture to remind that sister that she herself might be indicted for a similar offence; and I would like, in conclusion, to repeat a pathetic sentence of my little client's that rang sorrowfully in my ear last night and remains with me to-day—"I loved Gerald, and I had no mother."

BLA. (*opening her arms*) Amy, my child, my child!

AMY. Blanche.

OWEN. And now I suppose I shall be justified in asking for costs. (*moves front of table to fireplace*)

BLA. (*to AMY*) Why didn't you tell me?

AMY. I—I suppose I didn't quite like to. You know, dear, I shall never see him again.

GERALD *enters shop*. TODMAN *motions to him to remain there, and enters room backwards*. Bus.

OWEN. Never is a very comprehensive term.

TOD. My dears, 'ere's Mr. 'Arringay. (*stands in doorway*)

OWEN. You see, your never hasn't extended to breakfast time.

Enter GERALD through shop.

GER. Good-morning. I—er came at this impossible hour because I—couldn't stay away any longer. (*puts hat on head of sofa*)

OWEN. We're all rather early this morning.

GER. I have something to say, Mr. Owen. I hope you noticed I came through the shop?

OWEN. I did.

GER. All right. Blanche, no doubt you know by this time how things have been?

BLA. Yes.

GER. You think badly of me, I expect—not perhaps without reason. I ought to tell you at once that the fault throughout has been mine—mine entirely. I daresay you will believe that. (*BLANCHE bows*) Quite so! Amy, I am leaving England to-day; I shall return in a year. When I do, will you marry me?

AMY. (*timidly*) Gerald!

BLA. A year will make little change in our position. If your present wish remains unaltered you will find your

future wife sharing the home—and it will be a very humble one—provided by my husband.

AMY. Blanche! (*throwing her arms around her*)
Oh, Blanche, dear, dear Blanche!

BLA. Mr. Owen has honoured me by asking me to be his wife.

GER. I am glad, very glad. I haven't known Mr. Owen very long or intimately, but I shall hope to rectify that by and bye. (*to OWEN*) Will you shake hands with me? I fancy you hesitated last night, but this morning you may be more lenient in your judgment.

OWEN. My judgment was quite wrong, Mr. Harringay; it has become my pleasant duty to ask your pardon. (*they shake hands*)

AMY. Why didn't you tell me about Mr. Owen?

BLA. I suppose I didn't quite like to.

AMY. What's his name—his other name? I don't know it.

BLA. Don't you, dear; neither do I.

GER. Well, Blanche, what is my fate to be?

BLA. In a year's time I will trust my sister to you.

TOD. Mr. 'Arringay, (*comes down R. C.*) may I take the liberty of wishing you every 'appiness. Dear me! what a delightful morning this would be if it wasn't for the inevitable!

OWEN. Leave the inevitable to me.

Enter CRAFER with breakfast things.

(*to TODMAN*) Ah! here's the breakfast! Apparently our slight friction with the milkman has been adjusted—eggs, too! I hope they've not been sent in a spirit of revenge.

CRA. It was a new man. I think 'e left 'em by mistake!

OWEN. That's reassuring! (*CRAFER goes out*)

BRIG. (*entering through shop*) Todman in?

TOD. Oh, my goodness! there 'e is! (*goes front of table to R.*)

Enter BRIGINSHAW

BRIG. Well, Todman! (*goes down R. C.*)

TOD. (*timidly*) Well, Briginshaw!

BRIG. I've come early because my time's money, and I've none to waste !

OWEN. Then why waste it ?

BRIG. Well, speaking among friends——

OWEN. Among people whom you know—yes ?

BRIG. Well, the fact is—— (*sitting R. C.*)

OWEN. Mr. Todman owes you a certain sum of money ?

BRIG. Yes, he does !

OWEN. Amounting to ?

BRIG. Eight hundred and fifty pounds.

OWEN. Is that correct, Mr. Todman ?

TOD. Yes, Owen !

OWEN. You've brought Mr. Todman's acknowledgments ?

BRIG. Oh, yes.

OWEN. Kindly give them to me ! (*BRIGINSHAW does so*) Thank you ! (*hands them to TODMAN*) Now, Mr. Briginshaw, we shall require a little time.

BRIG. Ah ! I thought as much.

OWEN. While Mr. Todman verifies them. It's well to be quite formal in business.

TOD. They are all 'ere. What 'ad I better do, Owen ?

OWEN. I think you had better pay Mr. Briginshaw. (*gets letter from mantelpiece*) I have reminded you more than once that my six months' account is just due, and in view of my departure I have carefully reckoned it up and placed it for you in that envelope. Will you kindly see if it's correct.

TOD. (*taking it vaguely*) My dear Owen——(*reading*) I don't understand—second floor back—five 'undred pound—board—new wash 'and stand—total eight 'undred and fifty pound ! (*drops cheque which OWEN picks up*)

OWEN. And this cheque for the amount which you had better transfer to Mr. Briginshaw—— (*TODMAN does so vaguely*)

BRIG. (*looking at it*) A cheque for eight-fifty ! Who signed it ?

OWEN. I did !

BRIG. And to whose account is it made payable ?

OWEN. Mine.

BRIG. But it's signed Hartley O.

OWEN. Chilworth. That is my name—the O stands for Owen. (*there is a general movement. BLANCHE starts to her feet*)

GER. What!

AMY. Cousin! (*moves C.*)

TOD. Sir 'Artley! sleeping in the second floor back. (*BLANCHE sinks back again*)

OWEN. Hush! we mustn't forget Mr. Briginshaw's time is money. Now, Mr. Briginshaw, have the goodness to take your hat, cheque and departure. (*BRIGINSHAW begins to go*) Good-morning!

BRIG. (*pauses at door*) If there's anything wrong about this cheque—

OWEN. Then I can only refer you to Scotland Yard.

BRIG. Bah! (*exit, banging door*)

AMY. Cousin! to think it was you all the time! Oh, I do so want to kiss you.

OWEN. The feeling is entirely mutual, if Mr. Harringay will excuse my saying so! (*kisses her and shakes GERALD'S hand. AMY and GERALD move to R. C., table. TODMAN gets toasting fork from side of mantelpiece and puts a piece of bread on it*)

BLA. I cannot speak yet—I cannot.

OWEN. You know my Christian name at last. But I am quite content to remain Mr. Owen as long as you please.

BLA. What can I offer in return for all your gentleness—your forbearance?

OWEN. I shall ask a high price; can you guess the amount?

BLA. (*smiling*) Perhaps!

OWEN. (*taking her hand*) And will pay it?

BLA. Gladly! (*music in orchestra*)

OWEN. Mr. Todman, your niece will shortly resume her sovereignty at Chilworth; she has already consented to take a lodger; but, of course, you must come to us.

TOD. My dear Owen, I should say 'Artley, excuse me, Sir 'Artley. (*waves toasting fork*)

OWEN. The question is not debatable. (*half aside to BLANCHE*) I believe you are regretting our little shop.

BLA. I almost believe I am. I don't understand. You allowed Chilworth and the title to remain unclaimed during this long time.

OWEN. Yes.

BLA. And you would have left it all and gone away ?

OWEN. Yes.

BLA. Why ? (*rises*)

OWEN. Blanche, can you ask the descendant of Sir Geoffrey Chilworth why——

“For the Sake of a Woman.”

(*They cross to R. C. table as curtain descends*)

CURTAIN.

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BY

R. C. CARTON

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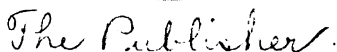
A New and Original Modern Play in
Three Acts

BY
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DR. LATIMER.....	Mr. Nutcombe Gould
MARK DENZIL.....	Mr. Yorke Stephens
GEORGE ADDIS, <i>Choir Master</i>	Mr. George Alexander
BAMFIELD.....	Mrs. Ben. Webster
SCOLLY, <i>Gardener</i>	Mr. Alfred Holles
HELEN } <i>The Doctor's Daughters.</i> }	Miss Marion Terry
MAUD }	Miss Maud Millet
JANET FELTON.....	Miss Ada Neilson

ACT III.—THE SHADOW FADES. Scene.—Same. (*Eight months later.*)

SUNLIGHT AND SHADOW.

PROPERTY PLOT.

ACT I.

Garden furniture.—Flower beds and plants everywhere possible. Flower boxes round window. Garden roller. Garden seat R. Rustic table R. Low armchair (rustic). Arm and ordinary wicker chair L., with large, round, rustic table C. Curtains (thin) to draw in Act III. on window L., that is if same piece is used, turn round for Act II.; if not, two sets of curtains wanted, as they show through in this act behind window and must be same as Act II. Garden stage cloth or green baize down.

Hand Props.—Off L. Large ledger, circulars and envelopes, novel, cider jug (three-handled one), tea-tray, pot, and four cups and saucers. Two tennis racquets, tennis balls and net, letter for Addis off R., railway rug, newspapers, cigars, case and lights.

Large real tree through table L. C. Autumn leaves on trees. Flower pots all round stage. Real country garden effect.

ACTS II. and III. (Both same scene).

Good, old-fashioned substantial leather or oak furniture, large bookcase R., bureau R. C., with small seat to hold two in front of it, round or octagon table L. C., with armchair R. of it, and old winged or hood chair L., armchair behind bureau, fan front of fireplace, six small chairs about stage, small stool behind table L., footstool L. of it, small tables or stands R. and L. of window, fire-irons and fender for fireplace, rug in front of fire and in front of doors and window, good old-fashioned, dark carpet over stage, plants on shelves inside window and outside the window opposite door against back cloth, curtains on window to draw in

Act III. with balance over top of window-piece inside, small clock on mantelpiece with ornaments, small logs of wood in wood basket side of fireplace.

Hand Props.—Pocketbook and notes for Doctor, letter for Helen, bunch of flowers for Addis, key of bureau under clock, stethoscope for Maud, "Queen" newspaper, paper dress patterns and work-basket, scissors and pincushion on table L., tobacco jar, pipe and scent-bottle on mantelpiece, writing materials on bureau.

ACT III.

Remove fan from front of fire, fire lighted, close curtains over the window, lighted lamp and shade top of bureau, four candles lighted with shades. Bunches of holly and mistletoe about, remove plants from outside window and all bright ones from inside, chessboard and men on table L., pillows on chair L.

Hand Props.—Letter for Doctor, letter for Addis, bouquet for Maud, letters and papers for Scollick, overcoat and hat for Helen L., books on table at back.

GAS AND LIME PLOT.

ACT I.

Gas three-fourths up to begin, goes down very slowly to nearly dark at cues given by stage manager.

Limes.—Amber to begin from every available place, change at cue to salmon, then slowly to red at end of act. Must have six limes.

ACT II.

Gas three-fourths up all through (no change).

Limes.—Two ambers on back cloth and through window, two ambers from Proscenium R. and L. to flood stage.

ACT III.

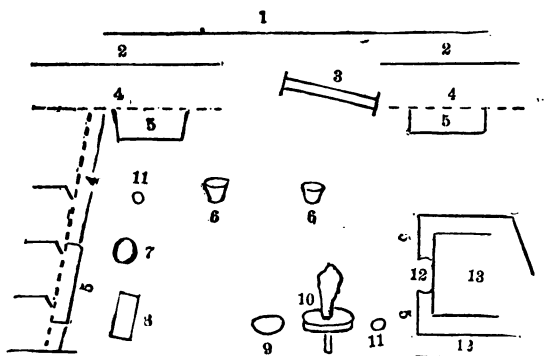
Gas one-half down all through (no change). Lighter fire, L.

Limes.—Blue on back cloth, and through window, red for fireplace.

SCENE PLOT.

ACT I.

Pretty landscape exterior (autumn effect). Old-fashioned house and window L., oak pailings and gate across stage from R. to L., back village cloth distant with church painted, cut tree cloth front of same, wood wings R. and L., wood borders, the window is supposed to be exterior of Act II., the backing to window must be same as Act II. interior, flower beds everywhere possible, rose trees and flowers in pots *ad lib.*, house piece with raking roof L., with old fashioned window front of it, taped diamond panes, door in c. of it, shelves or flower boxes round it, stage cloth down with glass plot c., house covered with evergreens and ivy.



1. Back cloth; 2. Cut cloth; 3. Gate; 4. Railings; 5. Flower beds; 6. Plants; 7. Table; 8. Garden seat; 9. Armchair; 10. Table with hole in centre for tree; 11. Chairs; 12. Window; 13. Interior backing. House piece with roof on and door over window.

P. S.—Only entrances used are through gate and off R. and L.; through window into house; above house; wing L.

ACTS II. and III.

Pretty old-fashioned scene, quaint Queen Anne style, raking roof to window c., doors R. and L., fireplace L., large window c. with seats in it (supposed to be Act I. only inside) window piece turned round to show inside, interior backings, door, tiled backing fireplace.

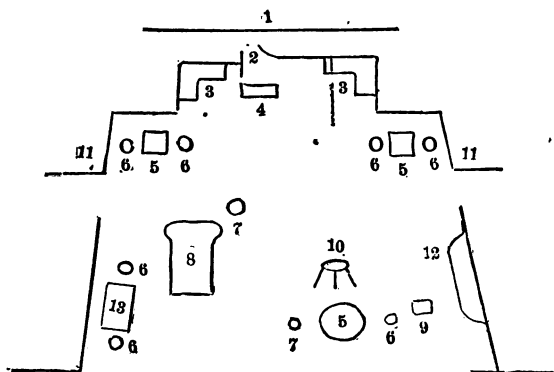
Scene is oak panelling, and a dark red or terra cotta paper effect with frieze or dado. Good old-fashioned carpet over stage.

ACT II.

Landscape cloth to back window, supposed to be Act I.). Garden exterior.

ACT III.

Act III. is the same, only showing landscape cloth and snow stage cloth outside the window.



1. Small cloth backing; 2. Open door; 3. Seats; 4. Window with seats in it; 5. Tables; 6. Chairs; 7. Armchairs; 8. Bureau, with key (back to audience); 9. Hassock; 10. Stool; 11. Backing; 12. Fireplace with real glass over mantel; 13. Bookcase.

The above pieces of furniture are necessary for action of play. Anything else nice to dress stage, such as draperies, ornaments, odds and ends, etc.

SUNLIGHT AND SHADOW.

ACT I.

SCENE—*The Doctor's garden. Lawn running round the house. Large fruit trees in centre Bay window of house L. Path leading to small wicket gate R., beyond which country lane and open landscape.*

TIME—*Afternoon.*

SCOLICK, the gardener, discovered. *He is rolling the lawn—pauses.*

SCOLICK. "Lawn tennis!" Ugh! It's a hepidemic! Miss Maud's got it very bad. (*sits on roller C.*) She says, "Scollick, 'ave you cut the grass?" she says. "I 'ave," I says. "'Ow about the 'ouse?" she says. "It's on now," I says. "Very well," she says, "then you can roll it till tea-time." Roll it till tea-time! I wonder the very worms don't turn. Talk about 'ard labor, it 'ud be a little 'oliday to me to go on the treadmill.

Enter JANET FELTON R., she leans on gate C.

JANET. Is this Dr. Latimer's?

SCOL. Roll it till tea-time!

JANET. Did you hear me speak?

SCOL. (*turns round and looks at her*) No.

JANET. Well, you hear me now. Is this Dr. Latimer's?

SCOL. Yes.

JANET. Is he at home? (*coming through gate*)

SCOL. Dunno.

JANET. Well, go and find out.

SCOL. (*lighting a pipe*) Go and find out! Can't you see I'm 'ard at work? Besides, this ain't the patients' entrance, it's round in the front.

JANET. Come, do as I tell you. Find out at once, do you hear?

SCOL. All right, all right. I 'ear. But you're keeping me from my work. (*goes slowly L., in front of table*) Wot name, if he's in?

JANET. Never mind the name. Say a woman wants to see him.

SCOL. A lady?

JANET. I said a woman! Go!

SCOL. (*aside*) If the Doctor ain't in, I don't think it'll make much odds—she looks gratus. (*exit into house* L. JANET *has seated herself under the tree in chair R.*)

JANET. A lady! A lady! I never could learn to be that somehow. A man tried to teach me once, but I got sick of it and ran away from school. I wonder what's happened to the schoolmaster?

Enter HELEN from house, followed by SCOLLICK, who slowly pushes roller off L.

HELEN. You wish to see Dr. Latimer?

JANET. Yes.

HELEN. He is out, but I expect him back during the afternoon. Will you leave any message?

JANET. No. I like dealing with principals. My business is with him. Oh! you needn't be afraid, I only want him to give me a little information. (*rises*) I'll come back, perhaps. You're Miss Latimer?

HELEN. Yes.

JANET. Oh. Good-day. (*coughs, moves slowly towards gate*) Is it far to the village?

HELEN. About half a mile. But, pardon me, you look tired and ill. Won't you rest and wait for my father?

JANET. No, I'm used to being tired and ill—I'll get along. (*coughs*)

HELEN. (*aside*) What a strange woman! Do you know Dr. Latimer?

JANET. I knew of him—once—many years ago. I'm quite a stranger to him. Good-day.

HELEN. Good-day.

She goes slowly towards gate C., meets ADDIS who enters R. He bows to her slightly and advances to HELEN. ADDIS carries a roll of music and a written letter.

ADDIS. (*to JANET as he passes*) I beg your pardon. Ah, Helen, I met the Doctor in the village, and he asked

me to give you this letter. It's from Mr. Denzil, I think. (*gives letter to HELEN. JANET turns with her hand on the gate and listens*)

HELEN. From Mr. Denzil! (*eagerly*) Oh, thank you, George. (*reads*) "My dear Latimer, I shall venture to trespass on your friendly hospitality again for a short time, as I have a matter of great importance—to me at least—to talk over with you. Shall arrive by afternoon train. Heartily yours, Mark Denzil." I'm so glad—he's such an old friend of Dad's—and—and—oh dear! there is nothing in the house for dinner. Scollick—where's Scollick? I must send him. (*goes towards house, placing letter on the table as she goes*) Scollick! George, would you see if he's on the lawn in the front? (*exit through window L., ADDIS goes up stage and exit L. back of house*)

JANET. (*comes down stage, goes towards table, picks up letter, and reads it hastily*) His writing! I'm in luck.

ADDIS. Scollick's not there, dear. (*comes back, moves down R. C., sees JANET*) I beg your pardon.

JANET. I saw Miss Latimer drop this, I thought it might be important.

ADDIS. (*taking it*) Thank you (*JANET looks at ADDIS and exits through gate R.*)

ADDIS. (C.) Strange. (*moving up to gate. Re-enter HELEN L., carrying ledger, pencil, circulars and envelopes, putting book on table. Moving down R. of table*) I couldn't find Scollick anywhere, Helen. Who was that strange woman who was here just now? (*looking off R.*)

HELEN. I don't know. She wants to see Dad on business. She wouldn't say what. Why do you ask?

ADDIS. (C.) For no reason. Here's your letter, you dropped it just now.

HELEN. (R. of C. table) No, I didn't. I remember putting it down on that table.

ADDIS. Did you? Then what did she mean?

HELEN. I don't understand.

ADDIS. Never mind, it doesn't matter. And so Mr. Denzil is coming back. (*HELEN has seated herself at rustic table and opened a large book. Begins to make memoranda. ADDIS seated R. of table*)

HELEN. (*sits R. of table*) George, you don't mind my looking over Dad's accounts? I can't quite make out who owes what without going through the Doomsday Book.

ADDIS. Doomsday Book?

HELEN. Yes that's what Maud calls it, because there are so many accounts in it that are not likely to be paid before that date.

ADDIS. Can I help you, dear?

HELEN. Yes. Fold those circulars up, and put them in the envelopes.

ADDIS. And so Mr. Denzil is coming back?

HELEN. Yes. It's very nice for—— (*catches sight of his face*) Dad. Isn't it?

ADDIS. Very.

HELEN. And—and—it makes a change for all of us, doesn't it?

ADDIS. It makes a change for all of us, as you say. Helen, how have things been going on? I haven't been here much lately, you know.

HELEN. Badly, George. Dad is so good, too good, in fact—but he was born to be a physician, not a financier—and so when we have a joint, it's like a successful novel, and runs through several editions. I'm afraid I'm not a very good manager. Dad asks me to keep the bills down. I try, but the motto of the British tradesman is "Excelsior!"

ADDIS. I wish I could do something to help the Doctor. He knows I would if I could.

HELEN. Of course he does. And how are you getting on, George?

ADDIS. The same as ever.

HELEN. And the choir?

ADDIS. You heard them last Sunday.

HELEN. Yes.

ADDIS. Well?

HELEN. They all seemed a little independent, I thought.

ADDIS. Ah, it's thankless work, Helen. I'm going away.

HELEN. Going away!

ADDIS. For a little while—for my holiday in fact—and so I came this afternoon to say good-bye.

HELEN. Good-bye! Why, when do you go?

ADDIS. To-morrow.

HELEN. Well, then, you'll stay and dine to-night, of course?

ADDIS. No, I'm afraid I can't.

HELEN. But why not, George? What do you mean by

avoiding us in this way? Give an account of yourself at once! Tell me all about it.

ADDIS. I don't know that there is anything to tell. I haven't been here much lately because—well, because it seemed in a certain sense my duty to stay away—you see, Helen, I have always been alone—my parents died, as you know, when I was still a child, in the time when loving care is most needed I was alone—in the dreary hours of school life, I was still alone—in the midst of its noisy solitude I soon learned the sad lesson that a crippled form is Nature's pillory. At last health and strength entirely failed me. It was then that your father's skill intervened and saved my life, and I grew in time to this semblance of manhood.

HELEN. George!

ADDIS. Doctor Latimer has been the kindest of friends to me—he gave me the freedom of his house—he gave me——

HELEN. Two sisters.

ADDIS. He gave me two sisters. My life has been very happy with you, Helen—with you all—but sometimes lately it has seemed to me that I was too happy. I have my work to do and perhaps it is better for me to be alone.

HELEN. George, you are very unkind. I don't understand you. I see no reason why you should avoid us.

ADDIS. And yet there is a reason—a good reason.

HELEN. I don't understand. How long is this wonderful holiday to last?

ADDIS. A week.

HELEN. A week! Well, I don't think you deserve that I should say we shall miss you.

ADDIS. I shouldn't think you would—very much. Mr. Denzil is coming back.

HELEN. George, I believe you are jealous of Mr. Denzil.

ADDIS. Jealous! Oh, no, no!

HELEN. Jealous of our friendship, I mean—you silly old boy. As if any one could take your place. When you are not with us there is a vacant chair by the fireside, that no one can fill. The voice of the old piano answers to no touch but yours. You know Dad and Maud love you dearly.

ADDIS. And—and—you, Helen?

HELEN. I? Of course I love you. You say you have

always been alone—and so you have—alone in my heart as the one man in all the world to whom I could come in any trouble, for help, for guidance, for sympathy. (*takes his hand*)

ADDIS. Thank you, dear; you make me very proud. If any trouble should come to you—which God forbid! I should hold you to your word. (*rising and going R.*)

Enter MAUD L. from round house. She carries a racquet and some tennis balls in a net.

MAUD. (*calling outside*) Helen!

Enter MAUD.

Nell—Nell—Hullo, George, this is an honor. (*going R. and shaking hands with him*) Why have you cut us lately? You haven't dared to be ill again?

ADDIS. No.

MAUD. Then it must be laziness.

ADDIS. I suppose it must.

MAUD. You want a tonic—that's what you want—a little nux vomica. How's the pulse? Ah! (*holding his wrist and counting*) Rapid and feverish! There's a want of tone.

ADDIS. Really.

MAUD. There's a want of tone—I noticed it during the anthem last Sunday. (*going to chair C.*)

ADDIS. Well, then, it's quite time I went away.

MAUD. Why, you've only just come!

HELEN. George is going to take a holiday. He's going away.

MAUD. Where is he going? (*crossing to him*) Let me look at you. Paris! I can see it in his eye. Depravity is like murder, it will out. (*see book L. for MAUD*)

ADDIS. No, I don't think Paris would suit me. But what shall I bring you back as a present, Maudie?

MAUD. I'd rather leave it to you, sir, as the cabman says; but, of course, if you should go to Paris, I'll make you out a list.

ADDIS. Is the Doctor back yet? I should like to say good-bye to him. (*HELEN rises, goes to gate*)

MAUD. Yes. He's in his study.

ADDIS. (*crosses L.*) Oh, then I'll go and see him. (*crosses in front of table*)

MAUD. Tea is within measurable distance.

ADDIS. (*pausing*) Dear me!

MAUD. Yes, I know the phrase is not strictly original, but may we offer you a five o'clock stirrup cup?

ADDIS. Well, I hardly know.

HELEN. (*back of table*) Do stay, George, and then if you like, I'll walk back with you part of the way.

ADDIS. Very well then, I'll stay.

MAUD. (*takes his arm and walks towards house*) Yes, and look here, George, I wish you'd try and wake Dad up a bit. Couldn't you get him to invent a pill, for instance—it's so simple nowadays—mix a little calomel with a lot of advertisement—and the thing is done. (*they exeunt L. into house*)

HELEN. (*c. seated L. of table*) Poor old George! he seems very sad about something. I wonder what it is. Ah well, I suppose I ought to go on adding up half yearly measles and whooping cough—it isn't a very nice world. I think. It's been going on such a long time that like an old clock it has run down, and wants winding afresh. (*resumes her writing R. of table*)

Enter MAUD L. from house carrying a novel.

MAUD. Well, Helen, I invest a penny. What are you dreaming about?

HELEN. Oh nothing. Have you seen Scollick?

MAUD. No, why?

HELEN. Well, there's nothing in the house for dinner, that's all.

MAUD. What's happened to the cold boiled mutton?

HELEN. Cold boiled mutton? Oh, that won't do now. Mr. Denzil is coming back to-day. (*crosses to chair up L.*)

MAUD. The deuce he—I mean, is he, indeed? (*crossing R.*) I wonder why? Helen, what have you got out old Doomsday for? (*seating herself R.*)

HELEN. Why, you know the half yearly circulars must go out to-morrow.

MAUD. Oh—well, as I was saying, why is he coming back?

HELEN. Who?

MAUD. Mr. Denzil.

HELEN. I don't know, I'm sure.

MAUD. Why should you think?

HELEN. What's the use of asking me—what's seventy-eight pence?

MAUD. What's the use of asking me—divide it by twelve, like a sensible being. So he's coming back, that means curry again. Ugh! I can't eat it—I won't eat it!

HELEN. Do you remember if Mrs. Watson paid her account? I'm not quite sure myself. (*looking in ledger*)

MAUD. When in doubt send it in again like our butcher does. It's always a safe principle. By the way, Helen, you'd better send to London for chutney—do you remember Mr. Denzil's estimate of the local pickles?

HELEN. I think all the family took them.

MAUD. The local pickles?

HELEN. No, the measles—the little Watsons I'm talking of. Geraldine and Robert had them, but I'm doubtful as to Barty—little Barty.

MAUD. Oh, bother little Barty. I'm disgusted with this neighborhood. No one seems able to afford to be ill decently. Look at the Watsons! measles and scarlatina in one year. For people in their position it's simply reckless—and they all took them.

HELEN. Yes, they are a united family.

MAUD. And when the bill—that half yearly triumph of hope over experience—is sent in, the only answer is that money is tight. What's the use of saying money is tight? one can't pass the fact on to one's own butcher.

HELEN. No, one can't. I tried yesterday.

MAUD. Well?

HELEN. Well, the result was rather unfortunate. His horse was fidgety and I think he only caught the word tight—he seemed to fancy I was making some personal reference. He was very much annoyed and took the joint away.

MAUD. That's a nice lookout. With Mr. Denzil coming back, too. Helen, I wonder what the attraction is. It must be a strong one to induce any one to renew an acquaintance with our spare bed—the mattress is like a Switchback railway. (*see cider jug ready in house*)

Enter SCOLLICK slowly L.

HELEN. Dad asked him to come to us again, I suppose. Oh, Scollick, there you are! Where have you been?

SCOL. (*with a slight stagger*) Gettin' my tea.

HELEN. I see you have. I want you to go down to the butcher's and order—— (to MAUD) What had he better order?

MAUD. The inevitable chops.

HELEN. Chops! Yes, the finger of fate does seem to point in that direction. Chops—how I loathe chops! Scollick, order chops. Now, go along and make haste. (SCOLICK *slightly staggering moves away and exits R. through gate*)

MAUD. (*rising and watching him off*) I don't think he'll ever get there. (*comes down stage*) I wonder why Mr. Bamfield hasn't turned up! He said he would come round this afternoon and take his revenge. He'll never make a tennis player.

HELEN. Perhaps he doesn't give his whole heart to the game when he plays with you?

MAUD. (*seated on arm of rustic seat R.*) Perhaps not. His pipe worries him a good bit. A man's pipe is a great responsibility; it needs as much puffing at first as a patent medicine.

HELEN. And is the one hollow friend a man always seems afraid of dropping. Maud, what do you and Mr. Bamfield find to talk about? (*rising*)

MAUD. Eh? (*sit on seat*) Oh, well, there's the weather and tennis—and by the way, he has an aunt, a serious aunt, however he can't help that, of course. She wants him to go into the church, pointing out that that is the usual destiny of the fool of the family.

HELEN. And what did you say?

MAUD. I said I thought that was doing the *stage* an injustice. It also appears that she would like him to marry.

HELEN. Ah! he hates the notion of that, I'm sure.

MAUD. I—don't know.

HELEN. No, I don't see how you should.

MAUD. Quite so

HELEN. (*going towards her*) Maudie, do you like him?

MAUD. Ye-e-es, I think I like him. (*moving c.*)

HELEN. Ah!

MAUD. Pretty well.

HELEN. And does he like you?

MAUD. I—don't—know.

HELEN. No, I don't see how you should. (*crossing L.*)

MAUD. Quite so. (*moving over to gate*) Ah, here he is, pulling at his moustache as usual, as if it were a bell reaching to his brain.

HELEN. It's no use his ringing there—the house is empty—though of course there may be a caretaker, eh, dear?

MAUD. Helen! (*BAMFIELD appears at gate, carrying tennis racquet*) You're not good looking, so you can't come in!

BAMFIELD. I admit the disqualification, but I'll come in, I think. Whew! It's cooler in here under the trees. Coming up the road it's as hot as—as—— (*opening gate and entering*)

MAUD. We quite understand.

HELEN. You look warm, Mr. Bamfield.

BAM. Yes, I am warm. (*shakes hands with HELEN*)

MAUD. You look thirsty, Mr. Bamfield.

BAM. (C.) Yes, I *am* thirsty. (*shaking hands with MAUD*)

MAUD. Will you wait for tea, or will you have something now, with ice in it?

BAM. I'll have something now with ice in it.

MAUD. Helen, there's a jug of cider cup just inside the window.

HELEN. I'll fetch it.

BAM. That'll just suit me. (*pause. HELEN gets jug from house and gives it to him. He drinks*)

MAUD. (*seated R.*) And now, Mr. Bamfield, what's the news? I ignore the circumstance of your being an hour late.

BAM. Yes, I am a bit late. (*about to drink again when MAUD rising, takes jug from him and puts it on table R.*)

MAUD. In moderation.

BAM. Have you heard there is an idea of getting up a concert for the infirmary? Big notion, isn't it? I wish I could do something.

MAUD. You might sing.

BAM. Sing? No, I think I'd better not sing. (*seriously*)

MAUD. Perhaps you're right. Well, you might recite between the parts.

BAM. Recite—yes, but what?

MAUD. The dream of Eugene Aram is a pretty poem, and in your hands, would present, I have no doubt, some features of novelty. (*DOCTOR speaks outside L.*)

HELEN. Ah, here's Dad and George.

Enter DOCTOR and ADDIS from house L.

DOCTOR. Well, ladybirds! Ah, Mr. Bamfield! Broiling weather. Where's the tea? Bad thing, tea—most injurious—why isn't it ready?

HELEN. I'll get it. *(goes into house taking ledger, etc.)*

ADDIS. Don't abuse tea, Doctor. I can't bear to hear my friends abused.

DOCTOR. Tea is a stimulant. All stimulants are bad.

MAUD. Mr. Bamfield! *(aside)* Hide the cider cup. *(bus.)*

DOCTOR. Hullo! What have you got there? *(BAMFIELD looks at MAUD)*

Enter HELEN with tea.

MAUD. Barley water.

BAM. Barley water, I think. *(tastes it)* Barley water.

HELEN. *(to ADDIS)* Two lumps for you.

DOCTOR. Helen, did you make out that list?

HELEN. Yes, Dad. The little Watsons bothered me rather.

DOCTOR. Bothered you! Bothered me. I had to bring them all into the world. *(crosses and sits R.)*

MAUD. Yes, and it's hard that for that reason you should be expected to keep them there for nothing. *(bus. with cup)*

HELEN. Tea, Mr. Bamfield?

BAM. Thanks, no. I've just had some—barley water. *(ADDIS takes his cup and joins BAMFIELD and MAUD at back of table. HELEN brings tea to DOCTOR R.)*

HELEN. Here's your tea, Dad. How tired you look!

DOCTOR. *(seated R.)* Rolling a stone up-hill—the stone is heavy, Nell, and the hill is steep.

HELEN. I wish I could help you to roll the stone, but I can't. I'm no use. *(kneels to him)*

DOCTOR. No use. You are my sunlight.

HELEN. Then I'm afraid sunlight is no use.

DOCTOR. Sunlight no use? Ask the birds and the flowers—not that I come under either heading. Ah, Nell, I sometimes wonder how long I shall be allowed to bask in the sunlight.

HELEN. You silly, old Dad! What do you mean?

DOCTOR. Why, that some stranger's hand will pull the blind down one fine day—the heart, Nell (*putting cup down*), is admittedly an organ. Well, your heart has only been played on yet by relations—sister, father, clumsy fingers at best. (*strokes her hair*)

HELEN. Dad!

DOCTOR. But one day the real organist will arrive, and then, the family waltzes and gallops will give place to a sweet love ballad.

ADDIS. (*looking off R.*) Mr. Denzil is coming down the road. (*goes down R.*)

OMNES. Mr. Denzil! (*HELEN rises*)

DOCTOR. Ah, of course. You had his letter, Nell, I hope.

HELEN. Yes, and there's nothing for dinner. At least, I don't think they've come. (*crossing L.*)

DOCTOR. (*going to gate*) Who?

HELEN. The chops. (*exit into house*)

DOCTOR. Ha! Denzil!

Enter DENZIL at gate. Newspaper and railway rug.

DENZIL. Ah, Latimer, here I am, you see. (*hands him a newspaper*) The train was late of course, so there was no departure from precedent if there was from Paddington. Well, Miss Maudie, dear me, what a big girl you're getting! (*C.*)

MAUD. (*C.*) That's cool. I can't have grown much in a month.

DENZIL. It may be the heels, of course. Well, how about kissing me?

MAUD. Certainly not.

DENZIL. Not one—a fatherly one? (*bus., DOCTOR and BAMFIELD*)

MAUD. Are you quite sure it's quite fatherly?

DENZIL. Quite fatherly. (*kisses her*)

DOCTOR. You know our friends, Mr. Bamfield and George there?

DENZIL. Of course. Forgive me, Mr. Bamfield. Maud's fault. Ah! Mr. Addis? I'm extremely glad to see you. You are better in health than you were, I hope? (*shaking hands with him*)

ADDIS. I am better, Mr. Denzil, thank you.

Enter HELEN with hat on from house L.

DENZIL. Ah, Helen! (*takes her hand*)

HELEN. (c.) Mr. Denzil, I'm so glad you've come back again.

DENZIL. (R. C.) Are you really?

HELEN. Yes, really.

MAUD. (*back of table*) You might offer him some tea.

HELEN. Oh, of course.

DOCTOR. Tea, rubbish, only spoil his dinner. I suppose you had a good lunch before you started? (*sitting*)

DENZIL. I lunched at the station. I had a chop—a thing I abominate. (*bus. HELEN and MAUD*)

But I couldn't get anything else.

HELEN. Dad, I'm going down to the village. I must!

DOCTOR. (*seated L. of table, reading paper*) Is it important, my dear?

HELEN. (*going up stage, putting on hat*) It's vital! (*MAUD in chair R., BAMFIELD with her. DENZIL R. by seat talking to ADDIS*) Oh, Dad, I forgot. There was a strange woman here to-day asking for you. She left no name, but said perhaps she would call again. I won't be long.

ADDIS. (*crossing to DOCTOR*) I'm coming, too, Helen. Good-bye, Doctor. I'm starting early to-morrow.

DOCTOR. (*shaking hands*) Good-bye, George, take care of yourself and don't desert us for long.

ADDIS. Good-bye, Maud. Good-day, Mr. Denzil.

DENZIL. Good-day, Mr. Addis. I'm sorry you're going away. I still recall your sweet music with the deepest pleasure. It would teach even sorrow to forget. (*at gate*)

ADDIS. Ah, I fear not, Mr. Denzil. I fear not. (*exeunt ADDIS and HELEN R.*)

BAM. (*to MAUD*) Come and prowl.

MAUD. Where to, and why? (*rising*)

BAM. Round the garden. I can't stand Denzil. He's too fatherly. (*MAUD crosses L.*) I've had another letter from my aunt. I want to tell you about it. She's sent me a lot of advice and a quarter's allowance. (*crossing slowly L.*)

MAUD. Oh, then there is some balm in Gilead.

BAM. Balm in Gilead? What's that? New kind of hair wash? (*they stroll off L. carrying tennis things*)

DENZIL. (*coming down L.*) Well, Latimer, I've maintained my character as a bad penny. I've turned up again. (*takes out cigar case*) Have one?

DOCTOR. (*still seated at table*) Smoke before dinner—a vile habit, a pernicious habit. Are they very mild?

DENZIL. Mildness itself.

DOCTOR. Ah, well then, just to keep you in countenance.

DENZIL. I'm not detaining you from any case, I hope. Your assistance isn't needed to help any one into or out of the world?

DOCTOR. I am rather less busy than usual to-day. As a rule, my life is one long hunt from morning to night.

DENZIL. Yes, but then you're always in at the death. (*they smoke*)

DOCTOR. (*laughing*) Yes, yes! But what was that you said in your note about wishing to consult me about something.

DENZIL. So I do. (*he is strolling up and down*)

DOCTOR. Well, sit down then, like a Christian. Now then?

DENZIL. (*sits L.*) Well, Latimer, I'm going to take you back a long way with me—twenty years. Is your mental eyesight good enough to cover the distance and see me as I was twenty years ago? (*sits R. of table, takes off hat and puts it on table*)

DOCTOR. Yes. I think so.

DENZIL. What do you see?

DOCTOR. I see an impetuous, warm-hearted fellow; a man who had not quite left off his boyhood with his Eton jacket. I see a sunburnt face, a mass of dark hair; it was dark then. I see a pleasant smile. I see that still.

DENZIL. You paint with a friendly brush, Latimer. Do you remember the supper we gave you when you passed the College?

DOCTOR. The Hall.

DENZIL. The Hall, was it? The supper consisted chiefly of broiled bones—out of compliment to your anatomical triumphs, I suppose. Well, a few days after, I left England and we met no more till the beginning of this year, when I came back a kind of Rip Van Winkle, with only one friend I could identify—yourself.

DOCTOR. Quite true. What then?

DENZIL. Did you ever wonder why I left the old country?

DOCTOR. My dear fellow, no! If I ever gave the matter a thought, I put it down to love of travel. My conjectures stopped short at that point.

DENZIL. Ah, well, you were wrong. I left England, I severed the ties that bound me to home, kindred, friendship, because of a woman. (*pause*)

DOCTOR. Ah!

DENZIL. I suppose every man starts in life with a good balance of faith to his credit, until one day he gives a blank cheque to a woman, and is beggared. At the age of twenty-two I married.

DOCTOR. Married!

DENZIL. Yes, I married. She was not my equal in birth or education, but she was beautiful and young—young in everything but treachery. I was mad about her, mad! I found myself linked to a creature passionate, illiterate, intemperate. However, she soon left me.

DOCTOR. Left you!

DENZIL. Yes. She didn't go alone, of course—one of my friends!

DOCTOR. Friends!

DENZIL. Friend or enemy. We won't waste time in subtle distinctions. She left me with the knowledge that the woman to whom I had given my father's name was a wanton! You say my hair is gray. A man's head is often sprinkled with the ashes of his past. I left England as I then thought forever.

DOCTOR. Did you obtain legal release?

DENZIL. No. I shrank from the exposure. My marriage had been secret—my mother was then living. I wished to spare her and so I went into exile. After all, what did it matter? I had done with love, I thought, and I trusted to the one infallible member of your profession to work my cure.

DOCTOR. That being—

DENZIL. Time, Doctor, time, who like you is something of a gardener and grafts the fruit of indifference on the tree of knowledge. At first I plunged into dissipation, but that proved a failure, even as a narcotic, and, moreover, robbed me of the right to seek legal release had I so wished.

DOCTOR. I (*pause*) understand.

DENZIL. Since then my life has been an aimless dream.

DOCTOR. (*pause*) And why—it sounds inhospitable to ask—why have you returned?

DENZIL. The law of patriotic gravitation, I suppose. Every wanderer has something of the crab in his nature, and longs to go back.

DOCTOR. And your—

DENZIL. Wife? She is dead.

DOCTOR. Dead!

DENZIL. Yes, I had news of her from time to time and learned that she had sunk lower and lower in the scale of social degradation. One can travel a long way in twenty years, when the road is all down hill. I ascertained that she left England early this year in an emigrant ship, bound for New South Wales. That ship went down in a storm off the Goodwins. Every soul on board perished, and

DOCTOR. And so—

DENZIL. And so I am a free man. (*rises and stands R.*)

DOCTOR. It's a curious story. And now, Denzil, what are your plans? (*rising and taking his right arm and leading him across to R. seat*)

DENZIL. Well, I think of trying a country life.

DOCTOR. Where do you propose pitching your tent?

DENZIL. I thought of settling down in this neighborhood.

DOCTOR. This neighborhood! Good heavens! my dear fellow, you'll never stand it.

DENZIL. Why?

DOCTOR. Why—why—well, because the place is dull, and the atmosphere damp. There's nothing for you to do unless you apply for the post of churchwarden. You say you've been dreaming your life away, and I believe you. Well, you ought to wake up; try London life.

DENZIL. Not I. My mind is made up. I shall settle down here. If the place is what you say, you will gain another patient, that's all. In any case, I hope you will let me inflict myself on you sometimes.

DOCTOR. My dear fellow, of course. (*putting hands on his shoulder*)

DENZIL. And your daughters—Miss Helen, your sweet housekeeper, she—they won't mind the tedium of an old, a middle-aged fogey?

DOCTOR. Not they. And when they marry, as I suppose

they will some time, you and I, who have done with such follies, will share the character of grandfather, eh?

DENZIL. Yes, exactly.

DOCTOR. And smoke many a cigar together, but not as a rule before dinner. (*crosses L.*)

Enter MAUD round the house and down c.

MAUD. (*coming c.*) Dad, a messenger has just come from old Pinchbeck; he has developed symptoms of what I think you call dipso—something or other—mean old wretch, I'm glad of it.

DENZIL. Who's old Pinchbeck?

MAUD. The Churchwarden.

DENZIL. Ah! a future colleague, eh, Latimer? And he's inclined to be unduly economical?

MAUD. I call a man mean who only gives at the knees. (*going up to gate*)

DOCTOR. I suppose I'd better go; we shall have to make the dinner a little later.

MAUD. I don't think that will matter much.

DOCTOR. You'll excuse me, Denzil? (*exit into house L.*)

DENZIL. Of course. Maud will see to me. (*rising*)

MAUD. (*coming down*) Miss Maud!

DENZIL. Maud, I think—— (*warning to orchestra*)

Enter BAMFIELD from side of house with the tennis net, balls and bats.

still quite fatherly. (*puts his hand on her shoulder*)

BAM. (*aside*) Still quite fatherly, dash it all! Miss Maud, what shall I do with the tennis things?

MAUD. Put them in the hall. What have you brought that in for?

BAM. You said it wanted mending.

DENZIL. Ah, Bamfield, who won?

MAUD. Who won? Now, Mr. Bamfield, take in the things; you look like a salmon in a landing net. (*BAMFIELD goes into house, MAUD following him*)

DENZIL. Maud! (*she turns*) I don't fancy he'll ever get out of the net.

MAUD. Oh! (*stopping at door*) I said, Oh! (*exit into house L.*)

DENZIL. Yes, I heard you! (*sits wearily*) You and I who have done with such follies! Latimer little guessed

the truth. (*music*) Perhaps he is right. Perhaps it would be wise to go away without speaking. You and I who have done with such follies, and yet, she seemed glad when I returned to-day. Courtesy, perhaps, and yet, why should I fear? Is sorrow such a stranger that I should dread his companionship? No, I'll stay. I'll put it to the touch, to win or lose all.

HELEN *enters through gate, stage nearly dark.*

HELEN. Mr. Denzil.

DENZIL. Ah, Helen, so you've got back.

HELEN. Yes. (*coming down stage*)

DENZIL. What was the important business?

HELEN. Well, you see I had to—I was obliged to—it wouldn't have been ready.

DENZIL. The new bonnet?

HELEN. No, the new dinner. (*taking off bonnet*)

DENZIL. You don't mean to tell me you've been all the way to the village on my account? How good of you.

HELEN. Have you been waiting for me? (*warning for slow curtain*)

DENZIL (*standing by her*) Yes, for twenty years, Helen.

HELEN. Twenty years. I don't think our acquaintance dates back so far. Twenty years. I was a child, a most uninteresting one, I believe; and you? (*sitting R.*)

DENZIL. (*standing by her*) I know. Twenty years ago you were a child and I was a man. You were only beginning to read the book of life, while I was tearing out the leaves of the first chapter. Helen, when I came back to-day, you said something that made me very happy.

HELEN. Yes.

DENZIL. You said you were glad to see me.

HELEN. And so I was. You see it's so nice for Dad, because you're such old friends.

DENZIL. Such old friends, exactly. And so it was on his account you were glad?

HELEN. Ye-es.

DENZIL. Only? (*music*)

HELEN. No—

DENZIL. Helen, ten minutes ago I was in doubt whether it would not be wiser to go away again.

HELEN. To go away?

DENZIL. Yes.

HELEN. Why?

DENZIL. Because I love you!

HELEN. Oh!

DENZIL. Listen. I know, at least I think I know, all that reason would say in urging me to be silent. To spare you, and perhaps myself, only—only I love you. I have but little hope—only I love you—and I know, at least I think I know, that if you say this dream of mine must be forgotten, that in forgetting you will forgive.

HELEN. Mr. Denzil, I have nothing to forgive, nothing I can ever wish to forget.

DENZIL. Ah, Helen! You don't know what hope means to me. My past has been one long twilight. I have lived in the shadow.

HELEN. Mr. Denzil—I——

DENZIL. No, don't speak. (*JANET enters from r. and appears at gate from r.*) Give me your answer in one week from this. In that time I may have learnt to be a man. Shall it be so?

HELEN. Yes, if you wish. (*rising, pause*) Shall we go in? (*they cross to house, JANET moves*)

DENZIL. What is that? (*R. of c. table*)

HELEN. Only the leaves rustling in the wind. Come! (*at house*)

DENZIL. (*satisfied*) Ah! (*as they enter house L. JANET leans on gate and watches them c.*)

SLOW CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE—*Living room in DOCTOR's house. Deep bay window with seat in it, also glass door leading into garden. Doors L. and R. The whole to present a quaint Queen Anne effect.*

HELEN and MAUD discovered dressmaking, MAUD leaning over table.

HELEN. (*holding up pattern*) I'm sure we've got it wrong. (*standing R. of table*).

MAUD. Do you think so? (*back of table*).

HELEN. Yes, we must fall back on the "Queen."

MAUD. That sounds disloyal. (*sitting on table*)

HELEN. Look here, Maud, read it out again.

MAUD. (*sitting on table reads*) "A deep pointed tunic which goes into six pleats at the waist, all of which fall towards the body, centre, the tunic back is prettily arranged by gathering the waist along the half circle like top; while at the side one pleat is made; the edge of the tunic joining into the side seam of the skirt."

HELEN. Hold on, "side seam of skirt," well?

MAUD. "Lower down you place each of the single holes over each of the corresponding single holes in the skirt back and secure same, which forms a nice pouf pouf, as well as regulates the length of the tunic back evenly to the skirt edge." There, I'm sure that's simple enough, and isn't it sweet—isn't it a poem?

HELEN. Yes, one of Browning's. I shall never do it. But let me pin on the pattern of the bodice. (*MAUD puts paper down and goes round front of table*) You hold the pincushion. (*MAUD stands up and HELEN pins pattern on to her*)

MAUD. (c.) Will it be a long business?

HELEN. (c., *kneeling*) I don't know, most likely. Why?

MAUD. Well, I expect Adolphus.

HELEN. Who's Adolphus?

MAUD. Mr. Bamfield.

HELEN. Oh! since when? Lift up your arm. (*bus.*) since when has he blossomed into Adolphus?

MAUD. Since Tuesday afternoon. The fact is, he'd had another letter from his aunt. She's getting very restive (*dropping R. arm*) about his marrying, and, in fact, wants an answer, and so Adolphus wants an answer, too.

HELEN. Oh, Maudie, have you carefully considered this?

MAUD. Yes, very carefully.

HELEN. Since when?

MAUD. Since Tuesday afternoon.

HELEN. Maudie, you're very young, dear. Don't decide rashly. I don't want to lecture, but I'm older than you. Marrying is a very serious thing, and——

MAUD. Cut it short. (*scissors bus.*)

HELEN. Very well, Maud, I shall say no more.

MAUD. No, no, I mean the bodice. What you are saying is quite true.

HELEN. You see, dear, you don't confide in me. Until to-day you didn't even tell me his name was Adolphus.

MAUD. No, I felt it was a name that ought to be broken very gradually.

HELEN. Even now I'm not certain whether you care for him.

MAUD. You're not?

HELEN. No.

MAUD. Neither am I.

HELEN. Oh, of course if you simply make fun of everything I say.

DOCTOR. (*calls off R.*) Helen, just a moment.

HELEN. Dad wants me! Don't move till I come back or I shall never get that sleeve on.

DOCTOR. Helen!

HELEN. Coming, Dad. (*exit R.*)

MAUD. (*standing C. of stage with her arm extended*) Helen is right. One ought to be very careful not to—not to decide rashly. Adolphus is very fond of me, and I'm very fond of Adolphus, I think. Two souls with but a single thought. Only if I marry Adolphus, I shall have to supply the single thought. Oh! how my arm aches. I wonder if the back of it is all right. I'll have a look. (*goes over still with arm extended, to chimney glass, stands on chair*) I believe she's cut it too short, now. (*enter BAMFIELD at back. He comes down and looks up at her*) And I fancy it bulges a little. I wish I knew if it bulges.

BAM. It bulges.

MAUD. Hulloo! (*looks down at him*) Good-day, Mr. Bamfield.

BAM. Adolphus, I think. Don't let me disturb you. It wants sloping away under the arm. Are you there for the day, or is it that you enjoy looking down on me?

MAUD. (*stepping down*) I needn't stand on a chair to do that. Late again, Mr. B. (*begins taking off pattern*)

BAM. Well? (*puts hat up L., sits on table L.*)

MAUD. (*in front of table*) Well?

BAM. What do you feel about it?

MAUD. About what?

BAM. You know—last Tuesday.

MAUD. Afternoon?

BAM. Afternoon.

MAUD. Is George Addis back yet?

BAM. Yes, he arrived yesterday.

MAUD. Does he look any better for his trip?

BAM. No, I don't think he does. (*pause, bus. over table*) Well?

MAUD. Well?

BAM. What do you feel about it?

MAUD. Oh, I don't know. You fidget! (*sitting in chair*) What do you want me to say? I don't think you know your own mind.

BAM. Yes, I do. It didn't take me long to learn that.

MAUD. And I'm not sure that I know *my* own mind.

BAM. You've had since Tuesday afternoon. (*going round to back*)

MAUD. Yes, I know; but a girl's mind isn't a prescription that can be made up while you wait.

BAM. Look here, Maud, just for a minute. I want to talk seriously. (*MAUD rises and crosses R.*) At least I want to try. (*crossing R.*) I can't say what I mean, but I've a sort of notion that if I could make you understand what I—feel—you'd—you'd be a bit sorry for me anyhow. (*they sit facing each other*) Perhaps there's some one else you care about.

MAUD. Yes, there is. (*rises*)

BAM. Oh! (*pause, bus.*) Well, then I—I'm sorry, I've made a fool of myself I suppose.

MAUD. Yes.

BAM. Oh, good-bye, then. (*bus. rising*) I beg your pardon for—for having troubled you.

MAUD. Oh, no trouble at all, Good bye. (*shaking hands*)

BAM. Good-bye. (*going up stage*)

MAUD. You'll remember me to your aunt, won't you?

BAM. Very well. (*pause, coming back*) I suppose you won't tell me who it is you care for?

MAUD. Dad and Helen. (*runs away across stage to L.*)

BAM. Dad and Helen. (*following*) And no one else?

MAUD. (*crossing to C.*) No one else that you'd be likely to object to. (*he looks vacantly at her for a moment, then clasps her round the waist*) Mr. Bamfield!

BAM. Adolphus!

MAUD. Mr. B——

BAM. Adolphus! (*clasps her again*)

MAUD. A-dol-phus!

BAM. You've said it at last.

MAUD. You—you squeezed it out of me.

BAM. And it's to be yes.

MAUD. I suppose so.

BAM. (*kisses her*) Maud, you're not angry?

MAUD. Angry? I'm almost surprised. (*crosses R.*)

BAM. Ah! (*pause*) Maud, you don't seem to like the name of Adolphus.

MAUD. I dare say I shall get used to it in time. What does your aunt call you?

BAM. Dolph. (*in front of table*)

MAUD. Ah, there I draw the line! (*crossing R.*) Adolphus is a name that no amount of squeezing would ever induce me to abbreviate. What are you thinking about?

BAM. Well, I was thinking I ought to speak to your father. Oughtn't I?

MAUD. You wouldn't expect me to speak to your aunt?

BAM. No, I suppose not. Maud, I shall make a mess of it, I know I shall. (*C.*)

DOCTOR. (*speaks outside*) Come in, Denzil. I think they're in here.

BAM. There's the Doctor. I'll speak to him now.

Enter DOCTOR and DENZIL R., MAUD and BAMFIELD seat themselves very far apart.

DOCTOR. So there you are. Ah, Bamfield! Maud, have you seen my stethoscope?

MAUD. The telephone sort of thing you listen down when you want to find out if anybody's heart is in the right place?

DOCTOR. Yes.

MAUD. It's on the breakfast mantelpiece. Shall I fetch it?

DOCTOR. Thank you, my dear. (*exit MAUD R. BAMFIELD sits in window*)

DOCTOR. Now, Denzil, about the investment of this money. (*crossing in front of table to fireplace*) Old Pinchbeck has scraped together two hundred pounds, and is anxious that I should invest it for him. He has had a fixed disbelief in banks all his life, but now, being old and bed-ridden, he seems inclined to doubt the security of his strong box; and having no one to consult but myself, has

induced me, very much against the grain, to accept the responsibility.

DENZIL. (*back of chair*) When are you to receive it?

DOCTOR. I have it here. (*takes out pocketbook*) All in country notes. What do you consider a good investment?

DENZIL. Oh! well, there's a large field for selection—railway shares, foreign stock.

DOCTOR. Hum! Foreign stocks are rather like the old parish stocks—if you meddle with them you're very likely to put your foot in it. The worst of it is I'm too late for the bank to-day, and it's a large sum to have in the house. In fact it rather worries me. I'll lock it up now, and to-morrow—dear me, where's the key of the bureau? Ah, I remember, it's under the clock. (*takes key from under clock, crosses to bureau and locks up the pocketbook*) I should like to have left this key with Helen, but she has gone down to the orchard. Vexing! I have a long round this afternoon.

DENZIL. You can give the key to me if you like. I'll give it to Helen when she comes back. (C.)

DOCTOR. Good! (*gives key to DENZIL*) Now I'm off!

Enter MAUD R. with stethoscope. BAMFIELD rises and comes down L., DENZIL strolls up stage.

MAUD. Here it is, Dad. Are you in a great hurry?

DOCTOR. Yes, my dear, you see I am. Why?

MAUD. Only, because Mr. Bamfield, I think, wants to—to consult you about something.

DOCTOR. Bless my heart, does he? (*looks at BAMFIELD*) Want to see me, Bamfield?

BAM. Yes, Doctor.

DOCTOR. (*to MAUD*) Run away then, my dear, and take Denzil with you. I'll soon put Bamfield to rights. (*bus. MAUD and BAMFIELD. DENZIL strolls up to window, MAUD follows. At door she catches BAMFIELD's eye and waves her arm encouragingly and then exits with DENZIL*)

DOCTOR. Now, Bamfield, come and sit down, there. Bring your chair. (*they sit opposite C.*) Now, how long has this been coming on?

BAM. (L. C.) Eh—what? Oh, for months.

DOCTOR. (R. C.) Months! Dear, dear! you should have spoken before.

BAM. (*sitting*) Yes, I see that now, of course. I've been coming here a good bit, Doctor, without any apparent reason, gratuitously, in fact. I hope you're not angry.

DOCTOR. No—no—no. Many of my patients come gratuitously. Appetite good?

BAM. No.

DOCTOR. What do you drink?

BAM. I generally take a little—

DOCTOR. Well, I shouldn't. Does that hurt you? (*digs with hand*)

BAM. I say, look here—

DOCTOR. Ah, I see! Sleep well at night?

BAM. No, not lately. But—

DOCTOR. Just so, just so. Well, I don't think there's much the matter. How's the pulse? Ah! a little rapid, but not abnormally so.

BAM. Doctor, I wish you—you'd let me explain. You don't understand the case.

DOCTOR. Not understand the case! My dear Bamfield, there's nothing to understand. The whole affair is mere fancy.

BAM. Mere fancy?

DOCTOR. Mere fancy. The feeling will pass away and leave no trace.

BAM. The feeling will never pass away—never, Doctor! I knew I should make a mess of this, but if only you could see into my heart.

DOCTOR. See into your heart—pooh! Your heart's all right. Let's see your tongue.

BAM. No, I'm hanged if you shall. (*pushes chair back*)

DOCTOR. A little nervous excitement, apparently. Did you ever take any bromide? All you want is a mild sedative.

BAM. All I want is Maud. (*rises*)

DOCTOR. (*still seated*) What!

BAM. I've been trying to make you understand I'm not ill. I want Maud. I don't want a mild sedative. I don't, indeed.

DOCTOR. My dear Bamfield, you must pardon my obtuseness. I see my diagnosis has been wrong all through. You want Maud?

BAM. Yes.

DOCTOR. Hum! she's young to marry. Have you consulted her? (BAMFIELD *nods*) Ah, and then I suppose you thought it wise to have a second opinion. (*puts chair back and stands behind*) Well, Bamfield, the second opinion is always glad to be confirmatory whenever practicable. That's a leading principle of medical etiquette, and so Doctor Dad says "yes," but there is an important point. (*rises*)

BAM. What's that, Doctor?

DOCTOR. The world has gone hardly with me. I am a poor man in the fullest sense of the word. I have no doubt that your knowledge of this fact will in no way influence your course of action, but it is a matter in which frankness is a duty. My little girl can bring you nothing. (MAUD *at window c., on tiptoe*)

BAM. I'm glad of that. I have enough money for both, and she has enough brains for both, and so it's all right (*moves to c. and buttons coat*)

DOCTOR. As far as I am concerned it's all right. (*shakes hands*) Ah! Come here, my dear. (*brings MAUD down*) I have gone carefully into the case of our friend, here, and I leave him with perfect confidence in your hands. I should continue the same treatment, in fact. (*to BAMFIELD, pointing to MAUD*) Bamfield, there's your prescription, to be taken immediately, and one other point. Don't omit, when necessary, to shake the bottle. (*goes up stage*)

MAUD. I should like to see him dare to shake the bottle.

DOCTOR. (*going, turns at door R*) Well, (*they turn*), what about my fee? (MAUD *kisses him*) Thank you, my dear. God bless you! God bless you! (*exit R. door. MAUD and BAMFIELD look at each other*)

MAUD. Dear, old Dad! How good he is!

BAM. Yes, isn't he? I made a mess of it, of course. He couldn't make out what I wanted at first, and suggested a mild sedative. (*going towards her*)

MAUD. Well, I hardly come under the heading of a mild sedative, do I?

BAM. However, it's all right now. (*puts his arm round her*) Maud, the Doctor said the prescription was to be taken immediately. Don't you think I ought to take a dose now?

MAUD. Certainly not. Remember the treatment was left in my hands. (*silent struggle*)

Enter HELEN R.

HELEN. I beg pardon—I—I was going to—— (*they move apart*) finish the pattern, but I suppose it will——

BAM. Do for the trousseau.

HELEN. What? Maud! (*MAUD nods*)

BAM. (*L. of table*) I hope you are not angry, Miss Helen—Helen, I mean—I know I'm not half good enough for Maud, but I hope that by and by, when you've got over it, when we've all got over it, you'll try and like me a bit, will you?

HELEN. (C.) Of course I'll try. Mr. Bamfield.

BAM. I should regard it as a favor if you could make it Adolphus.

HELEN. Adolphus, by all means.

MAUD. Adolphus, kiss Helen.

BAM. Eh? (*looks at HELEN who smiles, kisses her as DENZIL enters through window.*)

DENZIL. Quite fatherly, I hope, Mr. Bamfield?

BAM. (*going to MAUD and putting his arm round her*) No, brotherly, Mr. Denzil.

DENZIL. Is that so? Was Dad said yes?

MAUD. He has.

DENZIL. And Helen?

MAUD. She has. (*HELEN goes up to window, then down to table, and, after seating herself, begins to sew*)

DENZIL. (*coming down C.*) Well then, I suppose I must give my consent, too. My dear, I hope the future will out-shine even the brightness of the present. I offer you both my warmest wishes. I shall venture to ask my friend, Bamfield, to let you wear a little trifle from an old friend who had a sincere though tentative interest in you before you were born, and in return I claim a privilege (*kisses her*) with the usual paternal reservation. (*strolls over to fireplace*) Quite fatherly.

BAM. (*moves down C. To MAUD*) Come into the garden.

MAUD. Come into the garden! Yes, that's the worst of having been christened Maud. I ought to stay and have that pattern tried on. (*going up stage*)

BAM. I rather envy that pattern.

MAUD. Do you? You wouldn't like to be cut out, would you? That was cut out. And you wouldn't care to be

taken in, I suppose? That will have to be taken in. There, go on! I'll come. (*looking up to him*)

BAM. You promised to play that tunc to me.

MAUD. Very well. Go into the breakfast room. The piano was tuned yesterday.

BAM. All right. (*warning for piano. Exit R. DENZIL strolls up to window. MAUD goes to HELEN*)

MAUD. Helen, you don't mind about this, do you? (*kneeling by her*) You don't mind about this?

HELEN. Mind, darling—what an idea! You know my only hope is to see you happy.

MAUD. Are you quite—quite certain sure you don't mind?

HELEN. Quite, quite certain, sure! You're keeping him waiting.

MAUD. Let him wait! Kiss me. (*HELEN kisses her, MAUD goes to door R.*) Helen, you'll have to live with us, or I won't have him. Do you hear?

HELEN. (*laughing*) I hear.

MAUD. And that's understood, is it?

HELEN. Quite. Run away! (*exit MAUD R. DENZIL, who has been standing at window, comes down L. of her*)

DENZIL. "There's nothing half so sweet in life," eh, Helen? You're not sorry, I hope?

HELEN. About Maud?

DENZIL. Yes. (*sitting on top of table*)

HELEN. Oh, no! It's a silly feeling, but you know our mother died when we were young, and so we were thrown together, and have been everything to one another until now, and I'm afraid I must have a bad nature, all angles like Great Britain before the Conquest, because just now I felt jealous that any one should come between us, you understand?

DENZIL. Yes, I understand. But, you know, I think yours is an April sorrow. Happiness is infectious, and Maud is very happy. Helen, do you remember what to-day is? (*start piano off R. Music starts. Piano off stage R. U. E.*)

HELEN. Friday, isn't it?

DENZIL. Friday! Not considered a very fortunate day as a rule. I want to know if I may give that saying the lie? (*piano played softly in next room*) Helen, it is just one week since I returned—one week since I asked

you a question—and then, coward-like, feared to hear the answer. Do you remember?

HELEN. Yes, I remember.

DENZIL. Have—have you decided?

HELEN. Yes, I have decided, but I thought I would rather write my answer

DENZIL. And you wrote? (*rising from table and going R. of her*)

HELEN. Yes.

DENZIL. Where is the letter?

HELEN. I have it here. (*takes out note*)

DENZIL. (*after pause*) Will you give it to me? (*she gives it hesitatingly, he takes it and opens it nervously, slowly reads, then HELEN rises*) Ah, Helen, my darling, have you thought of the years that stand between us? Can you really give me your love? (*about to embrace her*)

HELEN. Yes. Stay! I—I want to speak. You talk of our age, well, I think I shall age quickly. Some people do, you know. I'm sure I shall soon catch you up. (*music stops. Stop piano*) I feel very old now, sometimes, after an interview with the butcher, for instance. You needn't worry about that, indeed.

DENZIL. I want to hear you say, "I love you, Mark."

HELEN. I love you, Mark. Is there anything else?

DENZIL. Yes. (*tries to kiss her, but she laughingly evades him*)

HELEN. And so you see Friday isn't such a bad day after all. (*crossing to seat R.*)

DENZIL. It's not over yet, my darling! (*following her and sitting beside her*)

HELEN. I don't want it to be over. I am never likely to know a happier day. Why are you looking so grave? I wonder if these twenty years, of which you speak so often and so sadly, could pass before us like a panorama, would you tell me to look, or turn my eyes away.

DENZIL. I would tell you to look, because in the story of my past, though you would see much to condemn, you would see something to pity. Do you believe me?

HELEN. Yes.

DENZIL. (*after a pause*) I wonder what Latimer will say?

HELEN. Dad? Oh! well I should think he would say that "It never rains but it pours."

DENZIL. You mean because of Maud?

HELEN. Yes. Thank goodness she won't be able to chaff me now. (DENZIL rises) Oh, are you going?

DENZIL. I must for a short time. The fact is, I have been in treaty for a house in this neighborhood, and I put off signing the agreement till to-day.

HELEN. Why?

DENZIL. I mightn't have wanted it.

HELEN. Why not? (he looks at her) Oh, I see! (rising and crossing L. c.) Well, I think you can go and sign it. Say good-bye quickly.

DENZIL. Why quickly?

HELEN. Because some one's coming. (DENZIL goes up c. and meets ADDIS who enters from R.)

DENZIL. Ah! Mr. Addis, welcome back. Your holiday has been a brief one. (goes to window and gets hat)

ADDIS. Yes. Ah, Helen!

HELEN. Well, George, who are those flowers for? I needn't ask—me, of course!

ADDIS. Exactly! (giving them to her) I hope, Mr. Denzil, I am not sending you away? (going up stage)

DENZIL. Eh? By no means! I have an appointment, but I shall return later. Good-afternoon, Mr. Addis. (going to door R.)

ADDIS. Good-afternoon, Mr. Denzil.

DENZIL. Good-bye, Helen.

HELEN. (crosses to DENZIL) George, would you mind putting your flowers in that vase on the mantelpiece. There's a good boy!

ADDIS. (goes to fireplace) Certainly.

HELEN. Good-bye, Mr. Denzil. (ADDIS drops flowers. She goes to DENZIL who kisses her apparently without being seen, then exit R. Coming down) Well, George, what's your best news?

ADDIS. (going towards HELEN) Well—I—don't know. How long have you been engaged to Mr. Denzil?

HELEN. What do you mean? What makes you think we are engaged?

ADDIS. I saw.

HELEN. George, I'm surprised! Besides, I thought your back was turned.

ADDIS. (going down) You forgot the mirror.

HELEN. Oh! I understand. (pause) Well, I suppose

it's no good denying then. And so, George, you see I'm the happiest girl in all the whole wide world. (*pause*) George dear, you don't say anything. Aren't you glad?

ADDIS. Yes, dear, very glad. How long has this engagement existed? (*in front of chair*)

HELEN. How long? About twenty minutes. (*rising, going to him*) Oh, George, I can talk to you because you're just like a brother. You don't know how good he is, how noble, and to think he could see anything to admire in me! Isn't it strange?

ADDIS. And you love him?

HELEN. Love him? Yes, with my whole soul! George. (*ADDIS SINKS into chair, she looks at him, his head has dropped on his arm*) Why, what is it? You're ill.

ADDIS. Forgive me, Helen. I'm not quite myself. Don't look so frightened! The trouble is an old one, but it masters me at times. I think, if you'll allow me, I'll— (*rising and coming up stage*) go away for a little.

HELEN. Let me come with you? (*following him*)

ADDIS. No. I shall be better alone.

HELEN. Dad is out on his round. I'm so sorry. He would have known what to do. George, dear, will you go to his room and wait for him?

ADDIS. Yes, I think I will. Helen, you remember your promise that if any trouble or danger should overtake you, you would come to me. I know that now there is another with a better right. I have long known that the time would come, when our old life, the life in which I had a share, must give place to a different one—for you a happier for me a lonelier.

HELEN. Ah, no! George. (*taking hand*).

ADDIS. Yes. It is right and natural that it should be so. Only I love you, Helen, sister, and if fate should ever darken the fair promise of your life, you won't forget there is still a watch-dog, misshapen, (*moves up*) but faithful, You won't forget? (*exit GEORGE L., smiling sadly*)

HELEN. Dear old George! (*looking after him*) How fond he is of us all. But he still seems very sad. I ought to feel more sorry, but I can't to-day. (*crosses R.*) Mark! How pleasant it is to say Mark, even to oneself. (*seated R.*)

JANET enters from R. and appears at back in the window.

JANET. Can I speak to you?

HELEN. (*turning round hastily*) Oh, yes, certainly! I —didn't know any one was there. (*rising*)

JANET. The garden gate was open, so I strolled up the path. I want to see your father. (*coming slowly down stage*)

HELEN. I'm afraid he's out.

JANET. I don't seem lucky in the matter of finding him. I called a week ago.

HELEN. Yes, I remember your face now.

JANET. Do you?

HELEN. Will you wait for my father?

JANET. Yes, I think I will wait this time. I want to see him on a little matter of business.

HELEN. Will you sit down?

JANET. Thank you. (*sits R. of table*) Don't let me keep you from anything you may have to do. I've a great respect for the domestic virtues, although it's some time since I practised them.

Enter MAUD C., hurriedly.

MAUD. Helen, Mr. Denzil hurried back a moment ago (*pauses*) and asked me to give you this.

HELEN. Dad's key! I thought you said Mr. Denzil.

MAUD. Yes. Dad gave it to Mr. Denzil to give to you. It's the key of the bureau. Dad wanted you to take care of it.

HELEN. (*taking it*) He is getting very cautious. (*suddenly*) There is nothing in the bureau but old receipts.

MAUD. Mr. Denzil said something about a pocketbook.

HELEN. He must have meant Dad's appointment book.

MAUD. I don't know. I didn't quite catch what he said. (*going*)

JANET. (*to MAUD*) You were engaged. People who are engaged never attend to anybody.

MAUD. (*aside to HELEN*) Who is this?

HELEN. A lady who wants to see Dad on business.

JANET. Better say a woman next time! "Lady" seemed to stick a little, and I'm not sensitive. You're Maud, ain't you?

MAUD. That is my name, but I don't know you.

JANET. Quite so! But I do know you. I passed you in the garden just now. (*warning to orchestra*)

MAUD. Oh, I didn't see you!

JANET. No, very likely not.

MAUD. (*aside to HELEN*) Who is she? She almost frightens me.

HELEN. A patient of Dad's, I suppose. He will be back soon, and then we shall know, perhaps. If you see him, and he wants his pocketbook, tell him the key is under the clock.

MAUD. Helen, I don't like leaving you with her.

HELEN. Nonsense! Run away! (*MAUD goes up stage, stands at door C., then exits slowly. HELEN goes to mantelpiece, places key under clock. JANET watches her intently*)

JANET. You spoke of a Mr. Denzil just now.

HELEN. Yes. Do you know him? (*picking up flowers from hearthrug*)

JANET. We were slightly acquainted many years ago. I think my existence has slipped his memory. I shall recall myself to him some day, perhaps. You're going to marry him, ain't you?

HELEN. I don't understand you.

JANET. The question is plain enough. I should think you might fit a yes or no to it, eh?

HELEN. One moment. You say you have business with my father. I will take care that immediately on his return he shall be informed of your presence here. Meanwhile I will ask you to excuse me.' (*bows and exits door L. U. E.*)

JANET. She's gone at last! Ah! So much the better! (*start orchestra. Music. Rises, crosses in front of table and leans on mantelpiece*) I haven't worn well. I don't wonder I scare the birds away. And yet I was worth looking at once, so they used to say. What fools I made of them, what fools! Well (*crossing to C.*), now then, what's the best game to play. It's time I sorted my cards. Denzil is my king of trumps, but I don't want to play him yet. He must marry this girl first, and then we shall see. But money, I must have money! But how? This Doctor is spoken of as being charitable. He might— (*stands before bureau*) Charity! bah! Good advice and soup tickets! What was that the sister said about a pocketbook? If I could only secure a few pounds it would give me time. She put the key under the clock. I wonder if there's any one about? (*goes to window and looks out, then to door L. which she opens and closes softly, then takes key from under*

clock and crosses to bureau) No, no one. That's lucky. Now then! (*opens bureau*) Nothing much here—bills, receipts, old prescriptions—bah! This little inner drawer looks promising. (*opens it*) Only an old pocketbook. I wonder if— (*opens it. Enter HELEN unperceived. Warning for curtain*) Why! It's full of bank notes—quite full! (*music stops. Stop orchestra*)

HELEN. (*looking over shoulder*) My father says— Ah! what have you there?

JANET. Nothing. The desk was open—

HELEN. That is not true. I left it locked. (*looks rapidly*) Give me the pocketbook.

JANET. Pocketbook? I don't know what you mean. Let me pass!

HELEN. No!

JANET. By what right do you dare to stop me? Let me pass!

HELEN. You have stolen a pocketbook from the desk! I know it. But I will not be your judge. You may have had temptation of which I know nothing, and so, if you will restore it, I will say, "Go in peace," remembering that woman should pity woman.

JANET. You can keep your pity. I want none of it. I say, once for all, will you stand aside? (*advancing towards her*)

HELEN. No!

JANET. We'll see to that! (*seizes her*)

HELEN. Help! help!

JANET. Silence! silence! (*DENZIL outside calls "HELEN." He enters, followed after a slight pause by DOCTOR*)

JANET. Too late! (*goes down stage*)

HELEN. (*falling in his arms*) Mark!

DENZIL. Helen! (*pause*)

Enter ADDIS L.

DOCTOR. Helen, my child, what is this?

HELEN. That woman has stolen a pocketbook.

JANET. It's a lie!

DOCTOR. The pocketbook stolen? (*looks anxiously into bureau*)

DENZIL. Give it back. Do you hear? Give it back!

JANET. Very well, then, take it! (*gives it to DENZIL*) and let me go.

DENZIL. No.

JANET. Let me go.

DENZIL. No.

JANET. You won't?

DENZIL. No. Let me see your face.

JANET. Look then! (*pause*)

DENZIL. You! You! Then God has no pity. (*staggers back a pace. Music. Start orchestra*) Latimer, here is the book this woman has stolen. (*giving it to him*) If justice were awarded to the thief, she would meet the fate of a common felon; but I ask you to let her go away from here—free and unmolested.

DOCTOR. Denzil!

DENZIL. Because—because (*looks in misery at HELEN*), she is my wife.

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE—Same evening, winter time, snow on landscape outside.

ADDIS discovered sitting in big armchair R. of table—pillows. DOCTOR enters from L. U. E.

DOCTOR. Ah! you look very cosy in here, George; rather a contrast to outside. (*warms his hands*) I've been writing in the study since dinner, and my hands feel quite frozen. There's one thing about winter, it's always punctual. Where are the girls?

ADDIS. They are upstairs. Maud is dressing.

DOCTOR. Dressing at this time of night? Undressing, you mean?

ADDIS. Well, she's going to a party, so you may be right to a slight extent.

DOCTOR. Party. Oh, yes! to be sure. She's going with Bamfield to his aunt's, of course, I'd forgotten.

ADDIS. Doctor, how do you think I am?

DOCTOR. (*moves to table*) Better, of course. (*seating himself in armchair*)

ADDIS. Yes, but I want you to be quite frank. I want you to tell me the truth.

DOCTOR. That's asking a good deal—of a doctor. What do you want to know?

ADDIS. How soon shall I be about again?

DOCTOR. My dear George, an unpleasant truth is not like preserved fruit, all the sweeter for being candied; with care you may be about again in a month, perhaps——

ADDIS. And the future?

DOCTOR. The future.

ADDIS. Frankly, is mine a bad life?

DOCTOR. Who can tell?

ADDIS. I believe *you* can, and therefore I ask.

DOCTOR. (*slowly*) Well, I hope—I—believe there *may* be many years before you, but——

ADDIS. There is a “but” then?

DOCTOR. There is always a “but.”

ADDIS. Thank you, Doctor. I think I understand. But I have no right to quarter myself on you in this way.

DOCTOR. Why, aren't you happy with us?

ADDIS. Very happy, only——

DOCTOR. Only?

ADDIS. Only I think a man ought to try to be independent.

DOCTOR. Independent! (*rising and getting pipe and standing with back to fire*) Tcha! There it is, the most misleading word in the language. Put independence under a microscope and what is it? Egotism dressed up to look like a virtue. Every one is dependent on somebody for something. Children are dependent on their parents for food, parents are dependent on their children for peace and quiet, members of my profession are greatly dependent on the weather, which, in England, seldom fails them. A woman's happiness is dependent on her millinery, a man's happiness is dependent on his temper, his temper is dependent on his digestion, his digestion is dependent on his dinner, his dinner is dependent on his cook. The world itself, George, is dependent on the hope of a better. Take my advice, blot the word out of your dictionary, it has no meaning for honest men; leave it to the politicians. (*lighting pipe*)

ADDIS. Very well, Doctor. I've no objection, if you'll let me retain the word gratitude.

DOCTOR. Well, well! Where's the chess-board? (*moves up for chessboard*) Oh! I see, don't move, I'll fetch it. (*fetches and arranges chessboard at back of table*) It was very fortunate you inherited that annuity just when you did.

ADDIS. Yes, it was, but I was sorry to give up the choir.

DOCTOR. Oh, of course. Because rest is the finest medicine for you, you don't want to take it. I admit that your late pupils, taking advantage of your absence (*sit*) and the season of the year, have seen fit to form themselves into a band of waits, as a result of which I haven't slept for three nights. By the bye, a letter came for you this afternoon, with the London postmark. (*searches his pocket*) Where did I put it? Oh, here it is! (*gives letter*) some question of investments, I suppose, now you are a monied man.

ADDIS. Very likely. I daresay it will keep. I'll look at it later on. Let's play our game, Doctor?

DOCTOR. Shall I begin? We shan't have many more quiet evenings for some time to come. (*playing*)

ADDIS. You mean because of Maud's wedding?

DOCTOR. Yes.

ADDIS. It will be rather sad for Helen afterwards, don't you think?

DOCTOR. Oh, no! I fancy not. She has such a happy disposition. Dear Nell! It's singular no one has asked her to leave the old home!

Enter HELEN L., she takes a book from table.

ADDIS. You've never let her know that you were offered that appointment in Trinidad?

DOCTOR. No, of course not. It's vexing, very vexing, but situated as I am, it's out of the question. Had I been free, the post is a good one in a monetary sense, but it would be impossible to leave Helen, and so——

ADDIS. (*sees HELEN*) Take care, Doctor, or you will lose your queen. Ah, Helen!

DOCTOR. Helen! When did you come in?

HELEN. Just this moment, Dad. (*moves down to back of table, comes forward*)

DOCTOR. Ah! not dressed?

HELEN. Dressed? Why dressed?

DOCTOR. This party——

HELEN. Oh, I'm not going, (*goes R. to seat, opens book*)

DOCTOR. Why not?

HELEN. The fact of my not having been asked may have something to do with it, but in any case, I don't care for parties. I'm happier at home. (*sits wearily*)

DOCTOR. (*aside to ADDIS*) There! What did I say! Quite happy and contented, you see.

ADDIS. Yes, I see.

DOCTOR. After all, Nell, I rather agree with you. I'm not fond of parties, especially late Christmas ones. The gaiety is forced like the fruit, in fact everything, even the welcome, seems warmed up for the occasion. By the bye, Helen, I heard a piece of news to-day. Denzil, you remember Denzil?

HELEN. Yes.

DOCTOR. I've seen nothing of him since that painful business four months ago.

HELEN. No.

DOCTOR. Well, now I understand he's going abroad, forever this time, no doubt, poor fellow! There's no sight in this world so sad as a wasted life, is there?

HELEN. No. (*pause, then knock at door*)

DOCTOR. Come in! (*enter SCOLLYCK R. and moves C., then down to table*) Well, what is it? You went down to the infirmary?

SCOL. Yes, sir.

DOCTOR. Was Mr. Stanley there?

SCOL. Yes, sir. (*crossing L.*)

DOCTOR. Did he send any message?

SCOL. He gave me this letter, as he said was important. (*hands letter*)

DOCTOR. (*putting on pince-nez*) Ah, well, let me see, let me see. (*reads*) "Due from Daniel Scollick to Joseph Evans, landlord of the Mermaid Tavern, the sum of sixteen shillings and four." (*HELEN rises and moves C. and goes up stage to SCOLLYCK*)

SCOL. 'Old 'ard, 'old 'ard, there's a trifling horror. 'Ere's your note, Doctor. (*hands it and takes other*) This is only a little private matter. (*moves C., then up to window*)

DOCTOR. I should have said it was a little "public" matter. Well, now, let's see! Tut! tut! vexing to be sure,

just when I was looking forward to a quiet evening. My dear, I shall have to go down to the infirmary. (*rises*)

HELEN. But it's freezing hard. Must you go, Dad?

DOCTOR. Yes, I'm afraid I must.

HELEN. Then I'll get you your coat. (*exit L.*)

DOCTOR. Stanley wants me. Some fresh arrivals in the accident ward.

ADDIS. Ah, Doctor! Then I'm afraid our game's knocked on the head.

DOCTOR. Yes, I'm afraid so, too. (*to SCOLICK*) What is the night like?

SCOL. Slippy. (*ADDIS puts chessmen away and sits L. of table*)

DOCTOR. Ah, that may account for the accidents. (*HELEN enters L., carrying coat*) You've got your lantern, I suppose? (*SCOLICK nods. HELEN helps DOCTOR on with coat*)

MAUD. (*heard calling outside*) Nell! Nell!

Enter MAUD R. and moves C.

MAUD. Helen, such a bother! I've burst my glove. Hulloo, Dad, going out? Ah, don't. I'm only to be looked at.

DOCTOR. Oh, indeed! You'd better remind Bamfield of that.

MAUD. Adolphus will have to ride on the box, of course. What sort of a night is it?

SCOL. (*C. advancing*) Slippy.

MAUD. (*R.*) Stand away, Scollick! You're all over snow or frost or something. (*SCOLICK crosses to R. door*)

DOCTOR. Well, good-night, my dear. I must be going. Hope you'll have a good time. (*to MAUD*) Helen, you might copy out that letter I'm sending to the British Medical. (*C.*)

HELEN. Very well, Dad.

DOCTOR. Good-night, George. (*C. to MAUD*) I mustn't touch you, I suppose? (*bus.; moves to door. To SCOLICK who has whispered to him*) Eh? What? Certainly not! You drank my health twice last week, you're always doing it, you make my life seem one long birthday. Go on. (*exit SCOLICK and DOCTOR following SCOLICK*)

HELEN. (*L. C., to MAUD, moving C.*) Now, dear, shall I mend your glove? (*ADDIS takes chessboard up*)

MAUD. (R. C.) It won't be any good. It's sure to give way again.

HELEN. Will you have mine? I have a pair that would match your dress, the ones George brought me, I mean.

MAUD. What, your beauties! That is sweet of you. Well, I won't say no, because it would be a pity to spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar. You don't mind?

HELEN. (*quietly*) Oh, no. I don't mind. I'll fetch them. (*exit L.*)

MAUD. (*above table*) Well, George, how do you like my dress?

ADDIS. It's very pretty, I think. Who made it?

MAUD. Helen, she makes all my dresses.

ADDIS. (*in chair L.*) That must involve a great deal of labour.

MAUD. Oh, well, I'm a very easy figure to fit, you know, and Helen loves dressmaking. (*putting flowers in breast*)

ADDIS. Does she? And the bouquet, where did that come from?

MAUD. Adolphus.

ADDIS. Adolphus.

MAUD. (*who has gone to mantelpiece, to ADDIS*) I wonder if I ought to have a flower in my hair. What do you think, candidly?

ADDIS. Candidly, I like it as it is. Who dressed it?

MAUD. Helen. She loves dressing hair, so I always let her dress mine.

ADDIS. That's very kind of you.

MAUD. Yes, isn't it? So you think I look nice? (*moves C. and turns*)

ADDIS. My opinion doesn't matter. I, suppose you're satisfied?

MAUD. (C.) But I want to know.

ADDIS. Well, then, frankly, I should think you more attractive if you were less inconsiderate.

MAUD. Inconsiderate! What do you mean? (*moves in front of chair R. of table*) To whom am I inconsiderate?

ADDIS. To Helen. I have seen her trying to promote your pleasures, and they are many, often at the cost of her own, and they are few.

MAUD. Has she complained?

ADDIS. Helen never complains, but I know the truth of what I say.

MAUD. Oh! of course. I'm always wrong. I wonder you've the heart to pitch into me in this way? Didn't you notice how cheerfully she offered those gloves? It's all rubbish! The fact is, I'm always being abused all round. (*across table*) I'm sure to hear you, I might be Home Secretary, almost. Adolphus doesn't pitch in, but then he daren't, so it don't count.

Enter HELEN L., carrying gloves, moves R. C.

HELEN. (R. C.) Here they are, Maudie. (*gives them*)

MAUD. (L. C.) Oh, thank you, Helen, you are a brick! (*kisses her*)

HELEN. Ah! Mind your hair! Remember I arranged it, so pardon the sensitiveness of the artist.

MAUD. Nell, you didn't mind the bother of my hair, did you? (*looking at ADDIS*)

HELEN. Of course not.

MAUD. Or my dress, did you?

HELEN. Of course not.

MAUD. And you don't mind being left alone to-night?

ADDIS. As usual.

MAUD. (*crosses to GEORGE, looking at him*) You be quiet! (*to HELEN*) Answer.

HELEN. No, dear. I don't care to go out. I have some writing to do. (*crosses to bureau*) I'm quite happy. (*sits at bureau*)

MAUD. (*moves to table, to ADDIS, aside*) There! Now I hope you're satisfied, and sorry.

ADDIS. I am satisfied and sorry, but not perhaps quite in the sense you mean.

Enter BAMFIELD R., moves R. C., going towards MAUD.

MAUD. (*moves up L. C.*) Oh! there you are at last! No, don't touch me, I'm a walking pincushion. (*moves back*)

BAM. All right. (*getting gloves out of pocket*) I'll wait till I've put my gloves on. How are you, Helen? (*shaking hands with her*) Ah George, you look fit to-night, lucky beggar, you haven't got to go to a party.

MAUD. (*sitting R. of table*) Well, Adolphus, I'm sure

your aunt is awfully kind, especially to young people. I never saw any one play gooseberry better.

BAM. (*putting on gloves*) Gooseberry! Yes. I wish her principles didn't extend to the champagne. (*both putting gloves on*) I shall be a wreck to-morrow. Are you ready, old lady?

MAUD. Did you hire the brougham from the Dolphin?

BAM. No. I tried, but the Clevelands have got it.

MAUD. What? Well, then, perhaps you'll tell me how we are to get there?

BAM. I didn't quite see what to do, so I fell back on old Craddock.

BAM. Needs must, you know, when the devil drives.

MAUD. You don't mean to say you've brought old Craddock's cab?

MAUD. Yes, but it isn't the de—, it's old Craddock who drives, and he's never sober.

BAM. He has fixed principles as to Christmas coming but once a year still this is Twelfth Night, so the sentiment may have worn itself out a little. Anyhow, I'll ride on the box and hold the reins whenever we turn a corner, and if he should lurch over into the darkness, we shall still have the cab. Come along! (*moves up c. toward door*)

MAUD. (*rises*) Oh, well, I suppose we must chance it. Where's my wrap?

HELEN. Here, dear. (*BAMFIELD takes it from back of chair and assists MAUD. Then up to porch and looks out*)

MAUD. Thanks, Nell. Oh, Nell dear, do have a few sandwiches cut for me. (*HELEN gives flowers to MAUD*) It's a blessing to feel independent of the Mayonnaise. (*to GEORGE*) Good-night, old cross-patch! Sleep well, and wake up a little better tempered in the morning! (*shakes hands. To BAMFIELD*) Where's my fan?

BAM. Eh?

MAUD. (*c.*) My fan. It was being mended. I told you to call for it.

BAM. Funny thing you should mention that.

MAUD. Why?

BAM. Because I've had a sort of feeling all day that I'd forgotten something.

MAUD. Come along! (*at door*) Sure you've got your head? (*both exeunt R.*)

ADDIS. Helen, you're fretting.

HELEN. (*leaning over him*) What makes you think so?

ADDIS. I know it. You remember our compact. Tell me, although I think I can guess.

HELEN. Can you? I daresay. But I wonder you care to listen to my grumbling. I suppose teaching music makes you tolerant of wrong harmony and false notes. I'm out of tune to-night, George, out of tune. (*sits on stool*)

ADDIS. Whatever you say will sound musical to me.

HELEN. (*leaning on table*) Tell me something. What was Dad saying about an appointment in Trinidad?

ADDIS. You heard, then?

HELEN. Has he received some offer of that kind?

ADDIS. I—I believe so.

HELEN. Would (*pause*) it have been a good thing for him to have accepted it?

ADDIS. I suppose it would, in some respects, but of course it was out of the question.

HELEN. Why?

ADDIS. Why? Because he—couldn't leave you. He didn't wish you to know of it even, you understand.

HELEN. (*moving over to fire*) Oh, yes. I understand.

ADDIS. Helen! You heard what your father said about—Mr. Denzil?

HELEN. Yes. I heard.

ADDIS. You have never seen him since that day?

HELEN. No.

ADDIS. Nor heard from him?

HELEN. No. (*sits on hassock*)

ADDIS. The Doctor—Maud—no one ever knew?

HELEN. No one but yourself. I shouldn't like to think that any one would ever know, but you.

ADDIS. There is one thing I have wanted to tell you. That—that woman—his wife——

HELEN. Yes.

ADDIS. When she left this neighborhood, I had her traced. She is in London, but this fact is, I believe, only known to me. I had a fear she might possibly return here and attempt to annoy you. To prevent that I arranged that a certain sum, a mere trifle, dear, should be paid to her on the condition of her never setting foot in this village again.

HELEN. Ah, George, how good you are to me! How shall I ever repay you?

ADDIS. By telling me you are not unhappy.

HELEN. Unhappy. I wonder if I am unhappy? I don't think, I know. Everything seems dreary and hopeless somehow. I feel sometimes as if it would be easier to be happy. If one hadn't always to seem happy, it's so hard to remember that one ought to forget.

ADDIS. But forgetfulness must come—in time.

HELEN. If I could only feel of some use in the world to some one, to Dad, for instance. This appointment, George, that has been offered to him, must that be lost because of me? Poor Dad! after toiling all these years against fortune, almost against hope, and now, the chance comes at last, only to be lost because of me, but that shan't be! I'll go away. (*crosses to C., in front of table*)

ADDIS. Go away?

HELEN. But where? There is only one being in the world that loves me, but he is leaving England to-morrow forever. I may never see his face again! Yes, I must go! (*moving R.*)

GEORGE. You must go?

HELEN. It is my duty. (*sitting*)

ADDIS. No!

HELEN. But it is, it is! Oh, George, can't you show me the right thing to do? Can't you help me!

ADDIS. Perhaps. There is one way, but I can't tell you. —I can't tell you. I—dare not. (*rising, crosses C., in front of table*)

HELEN. You must! (*rising*)

ADDIS. (*L. C.*) I must! Well, then, listen! but turn your face away. What I am going to tell you may part us forever. If it should be so, well, the last words you speak to me on this side of the grave shall not be the utterance of a lie.

HELEN. (*R. C.*) A lie?

ADDIS. Yes. You say there is but one being who loves you. That is a lie! I love you. I have loved you all my life.

HELEN. Ah! (*hides her face*) No; no! (*in seat R.*)

ADDIS. (*follows and kneels to her*) Yes, Helen, I, the poor cripple, the scorned alike of God and man, I have loved you silently, hopelessly, for if in madness I ever dared for one brief moment to forget, my shadow on the wall soon taught me to remember.

HELEN. George!

ADDIS. Bear with me. It may be for the last time! When I saw your love was given to another, I made no sign, you never guessed, you never knew. In time I think I could have been content, happy almost in the knowledge of your happiness; but that was not to be. A shadow darkened the sunlight of your life. Had there been a hope of that shadow fading I would have been silent to the end. As you know, dear, I am no longer poor. I—can take you away. You speak of your duty to your father; that duty you can fulfil with a heavy sacrifice, but listen, it cannot be for long. I am a dying man. If your answer could be yes it cannot be for long. Fate will soon—set you free. (*rises, turns face away*)

HELEN. (*pause*) George, forgive me. I—I never knew, dear. I never knew. I wish I had, because it is so sweet to a woman to be loved, even if she can make no fit return.

ADDIS. No fit return! I see, I know, I—understand. (*goes to c. a little*)

HELEN. I don't think you do. I have always loved you—always—not—not in the way you mean, but—I have loved you. You have always been so gentle with me—gentlest when the world was hardest. Poor George, would it make you happy if I said yes?

ADDIS. Happy! (*turns to her*)

HELEN. Wait, dear. I must think—think for you—if you don't mind, I'll leave you for a little while. It is all so—so strange to me, but—I'll come back. (*going R.*)

ADDIS. Say one word. Tell me that I have not made you more unhappy.

HELEN. (*up R.*) No woman is unhappy in gaining the knowledge that she is loved. I'll—come back, I'll come back. (*exit R. U. E.*)

ADDIS. (*looking after her*) Ah! it's not true, it can't be. I shall wake to find I have been dreaming. Can it be that—I dared at last to speak and she listened, listened and did not turn from me in loathing. Ah, no, it's a dream, a dream. I must think. (*sits at table. sees letter*) I'll write to her, I'll write. What is this? The letter the Doctor brought me—from London. (*opens it abruptly*). I don't know the writing—from Richard Langley—the name is strange also. (*holds it to lamp*) "Sir, I was called in to a patient, whose name appears to be

Janet Felton"—Janet Felton!—"Low fever, from which she was suffering had advanced with rapid strides, and I soon realized the hopelessness of her case. Medical skill proved unavailing, she died this morning." Died! "Your name, the only one I could identify among her papers, has led me to address this communication to you. Faithfully yours, Richard Langley, M.D." Dead! dead! Then—then—at last he is free, they are free, he will come back and then—Heaven will need me no longer. I shall pass out of her life forever. (*rising*) Well, fate cursed me in the hour I was born, it set a seal upon me worse than a felon's brand, and now, when at last a chance of Heaven seemed dawning, the curse follows me still. She pities me now, and in time she might have loved me—in time! When I tell her—when I tell her—why—why should I tell her? This news is known to no one but myself, no one. He is going away at once, to-morrow, she will never see him again, no one need ever know the truth, no one shall! Ah! coward! coward! She loves him! Would you dare to stand between? Has your body its vile counterpart in a maimed and twisted soul? She loves him and you stand between. No, no, no, no! not that, and yet, she said she would return. Her answer will be No. I feel it, I know it, and then—I will tell her, and she will be happy. They will be happy. And I, oh, God help me! For this burden is harder than I can bear. (*covers his face, in chair*).

Enter HELEN R., moving C., she very slowly goes to him.

HELEN. (*in chair R. of table*) George!

ADDIS. (C.) Helen!

HELEN. (C.) I have come back to—to—to tell you—

ADDIS. I know, dear—to tell me that it cannot be. Don't be afraid.

HELEN. I have come back to tell you that I have tried earnestly to find a faithful answer to your question, and that I have found it. George, I will marry you, if you wish.

ADDIS. (*still in chair R. of L. table*) No, no, Helen! You don't know what you say. You're not—you can't be in earnest.

HELEN. Yes, dear, I am. (*kneels to him*) The true and fit return for such love as yours I cannot give, but

when I remember all your goodness to me, then I see there may be room in my heart for another love, a higher and better one. That love I can give you and you may take it if you will.

ADDIS. (*about to kiss her, then remembering*) No, no, Helen! You drive me mad. (*rising*) Noble, unselfish, you mustn't call me that, you—don't know.

HELEN. George!

ADDIS. (*in front of table*) You are sad, lonely, desolate! I have stolen this promise from you—you repent—you will hate me!

HELEN. (c.) Oh, hush, dear, hush! (*rising*) I shall never repent.

ADDIS...How can you tell what I am, what thoughts may lurk in my brain, the love of which I spoke to you may be selfish, treacherous, vile, how can you tell?

HELEN. George dear, you're excited, ill. You'll go and rest. (*moves up c. to chair, taking his arm*)

ADDIS. (*behind chair*) Yes, I'll go. (*going up stage, going towards door*) And yet—I can't—I must tell her, I must. (*moving down to her, takes letter from his pocket and goes to her*) Helen!

HELEN. (*seated R.*) Ah, George! I thought you were gone. You have not kissed me as you always do.

ADDIS. No, I have not kissed you as I always do. (*kisses her on forehead*) Good-night.

HELEN. What is that letter?

ADDIS. Nothing! nothing! (*replaces it*) You are happy?

HELEN. Quite happy.

ADDIS. (*going*) Quite happy. (*moving up to door L.*) God help us both, I can't tell her! (*exit L.*)

HELEN. (*rising and crossing to table. Above table*) Quite happy! Why should I not be? No, I won't think. I will forget. (*behind table*) I had some writing to finish for Dad, but—I can't do it. My very brain seems on fire. The room is stifling. (*goes to window, opens it*) Ah, how sweet and cool the air feels; how pretty the apple-trees look in the moonlight, covered with frost winter's blossom. (*returns to chair c.*) Mark! How long it seems since I saw him. (*sitting*) Since I heard his voice saying, "I love you." Ah, no, no, I mustn't remember, it is my duty to forget.

DENZIL. (*appearing at window*) Helen!

HELEN. Who is there?

DENZIL. Mark! (*moving c.*)

HELEN. (*rising, R. of table*) Mark! Ah, no, no! Why have you come back?

DENZIL. (c.) I am here because I am mad. I have no right to cross your path again except the one despair gives me. I shall soon be gone out of your life, and shall trouble you no more. For several nights I have stood by the gate yonder and watched hour after hour on the chance of seeing your shadow pass in the firelight. To-night you came to the window, you were pale and sad. If you had seemed happy I think I could have gone away forever, as I must to-morrow, without a word, but you looked sorrowful and I am here. Can you forgive me?

HELEN. Yes.

DENZIL. I suppose you hate me.

HELEN. No. (*sits*)

DENZIL. (c.) It would be small wonder if you did. When I asked you if I might hope, I believed, I thought, I was free. But the chain I forged in my youth is still unbroken. I must wear it to the end. Helen! I swear I never dreamed of wronging you even in thought. You—you believe me?

HELEN. I have never doubted, but it was cruel to come back.

DENZIL. (c.) Cruel?

HELEN. Yes. I was trying so hard to forget, and now—ah! think what it means—you are going away. I may have years of life before me. I shall never see your face again! Think what that means. Oh, it was cruel!

DENZIL. Was it? Perhaps; I came back selfishly, I admit, but only to see you once again, to carry away with me the faint echo of your voice, the sole music of my future loneliness.

HELEN. (L. c. *risés*) Must it be? Oh, love! I have waited for you, longed for you, and at last you come back, but only to say good-bye. I listened to you in a dream—a dream of joy to have you near me once again, to see your face, to know that by stretching out my arms I could hold you to me as I do now. Oh! why did you come back?

DENZIL. (R. c.) I came back, because—because I love you.

HELEN. Oh, Mark, hush! There is a double reason now why you must be silent. For pity's sake remember that I am only a woman.

DENZIL. Yes, forgive me. You are right! I ought to be silent, but remember I am only a man. (*pause*) God bless you, dear. Good-bye, good-bye! (*taking her hand*)

DOCTOR. (*heard outside*) Helen!

HELEN. Ah! It's my father returned! You will see him before you go?

DENZIL. If you wish it.

Enter DOCTOR R. Moving C. HELEN moves to fire and sits.

DOCTOR. Well, my dear, I've got back. Denzil!

DENZIL. (R. C.) Yes, Latimer. I came to say good-bye. I leave England to-morrow. (*HELEN sits in chair L. of table*)

DOCTOR. (L. C.) And so you came to see the last of us? Eh! well! Maud and Bamfield will be here in a minute. I gather their party has not proved altogether a success. (*it wasn't my fault, outside*) Ah! here they are!

MAUD. Don't talk to me.

Enter MAUD and BAMFIELD R. Go down C. MAUD sits. BAMFIELD behind her.

BAM. The Clevelands had hired it a week ago.

MAUD. Oh, don't talk to me! (*warn orchestra*)

DOCTOR. What sort of evening?

MAUD. (*seating herself R.*) Oh, a very pleasant evening!

DOCTOR. What sort of party?

MAUD. Party! We never got there.

DOCTOR. (C.) Never got there? (*standing side of seat*)

MAUD. No. We've been driving about the neighboring country all night. Our progress was slow because Craddock would stop at all the public houses to ask his way, he said.

BAM. (*side of bureau*) They are his only landmarks. BAMFIELD moves round table R. of her)

MAUD. I don't suppose we ever stood a chance of getting there, but if we had, Adolphus extinguished it by suddenly remembering a short cut. After that I took the

reins, figuratively speaking, and insisted on coming back, and here we are.

DOCTOR. Never mind—fortune of war! You don't see our old friend. (*goes up to window and takes off his coat. Worn curtain*)

Enter ADDIS L. advances, sees Denzil.

ADDIS. Mr. Denzil! Here! (*withholds his hand, comes R. of table*)

DENZIL. (*coming down to MAUD*) Ah, Mr. Addis. There's a pleasant sadness in the thought that for a brief moment the old time has come back again, and that I can carry away with me the cheerful glow of this home life. (*moves up to DOCTOR*)

MAUD. You are going away, then?

DENZIL. Yes. (*goes up and talks to DOCTOR*)

HELEN. (*in front of table L., aside to Addis in front of table*) You see he only came to say good-bye. (*music. Start orchestra*)

ADDIS. (*moves in front of table to HELEN, aside*) Helen, you love him still—if—he—were free!

HELEN. You know that cannot be.

ADDIS. (L. C.) But if—he were. (*HELEN turns away*) I—understand. (*turns to DENZIL. HELEN hides her face*) Mr. Denzil! (*DENZIL moves down C.*) Will you answer me one question? Is your departure the outcome of an old sorrow that has darkened your life for many years?

DENZIL. (R. C.) You guess rightly.

ADDIS. (L. C.) If you knew that at last the chain—was broken—and you were free, you would stay with those who love you. (*HELEN raises her head*) Well, that freedom I can give you. The woman who bore your name—is dead.

DENZIL. *Dead!*

ADDIS. Dead. There is the proof of what I say. (*gives the letter to DENZIL, who reads it at bureau*)

HELEN. George! (*aside, in front of table*)

ADDIS. (*seated*) Hush, dear! His was the older claim. Helen, you will let your brother love you still? (*HELEN kneels*)

DENZIL. (R. C.) It is true, true, Mr. Addis, I— (*holds out his hand*)

ADDIS. (L. C.) Ah! Mr. Denzil. I can take your hand now.

DENZIL. But I must still say—good-bye.

ADDIS. For a little while, but you will come back——
(*with his hand on HELEN's shoulder*) to those who love
you?.

DENZIL. Yes, I will come back to those who love me.
(*going*)

ADDIS. (*to HELEN*) Take courage, Helen, sister, let me
see you smile. The sun is shining, the shadow has passed
away. (*he is seated in chair, HELEN kneeling*)

CURTAIN.

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